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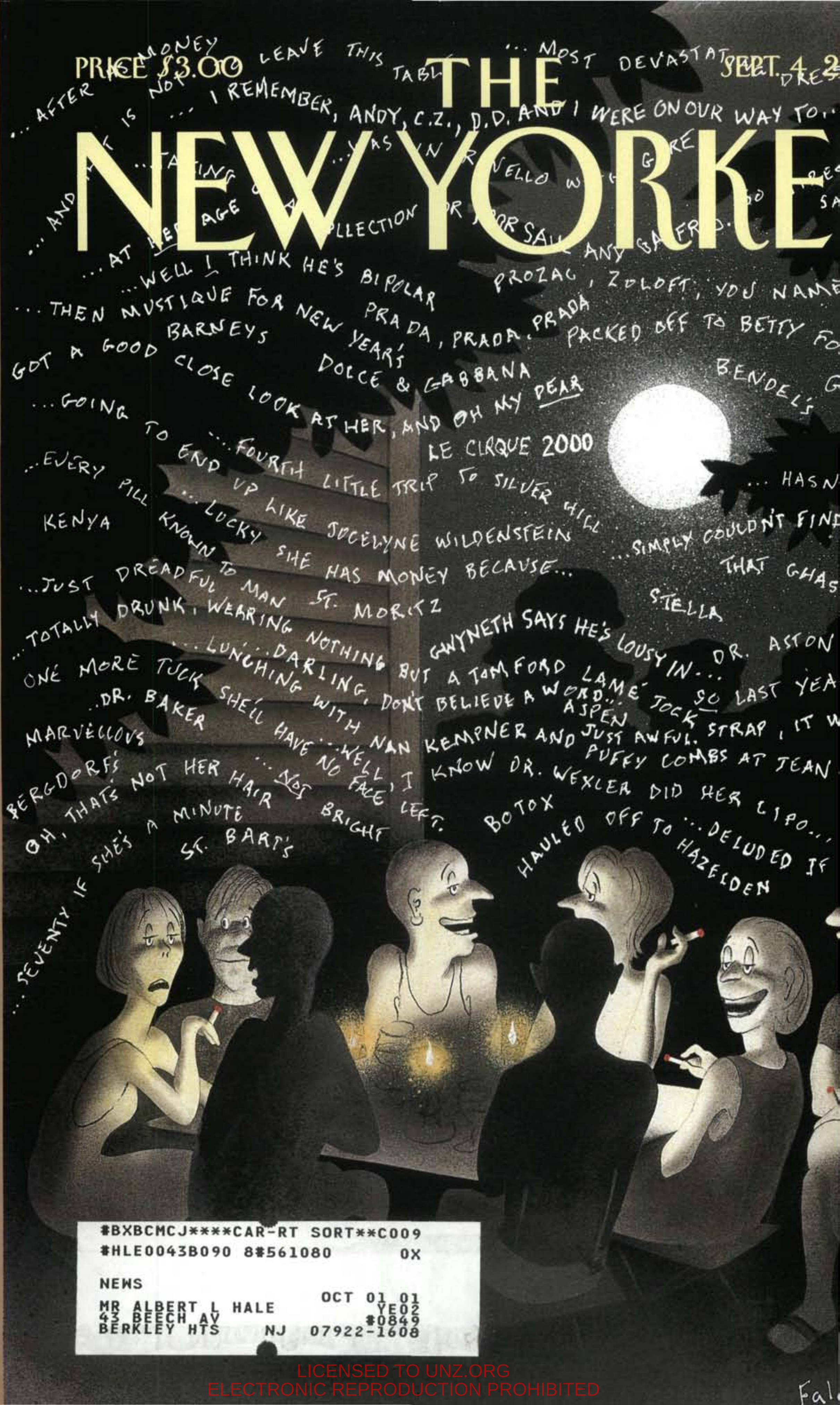
... AFTER ... MONEY IS NOT ... LEAVE THIS TABLE
... MOST DEVASTATING ... DRESS
... I REMEMBER, ANDY, C.Z., D.D. AND I WERE ON OUR WAY TO...
... AND ... TAKING ... WAS IN ... VELLO W... G... RE
... AT HER AGE ... COLLECTION ... FOR SAL... ANY ... FRED.
... WELL I THINK HE'S BIPOLAR
PROZAC, ZOLOFT, YOU NAME
... THEN MUSTIQUE FOR NEW YEAR'S
PRADA, PRADA, PRADA
BARNEYS
PACKED OFF TO BETTY FO
GOT A GOOD CLOSE LOOK AT HER, AND OH MY DEAR
DOLCE & GABBANA
BENDEL'S
... GOING TO END UP LIKE JOCELYNE WILDENSTEIN
LE CIRQUE 2000
... FOURTH LITTLE TRIP TO SILVER HILL
... HASN
... EVERY PILL KNOWN TO MAN
... LUCKY SHE HAS MONEY BECAUSE...
KENYA
... SIMPLY COULDN'T FIND
THAT GHAS
... JUST DREADFUL
ST. MORITZ
STELLA
... TOTALLY DRUNK, WEARING NOTHING BUT A TOM FORD LAMÉ JOCK STRAP, IT W
GWYNETH SAYS HE'S LOUSY IN...
DR. ASTON
ONE MORE TUCK SHE'LL HAVE NO FACE LEFT.
... LUNCHING WITH NAN KEMPNER AND PUFFY COMBS AT JEAN
... DARLING, DON'T BELIEVE A WORD..
ASPEN
JUST AWFUL.
SO LAST YEA
..DR. BAKER
MARVELLOUS
... WELL, I KNOW DR. WEXLER DID HER LIPO...
BERGDORF'S
OH, THAT'S NOT HER HAIR
... NOT BRIGHT
BOTOX
HAULED OFF TO HAZELDEN
... DELUDED IF
... SEVENTY IF SHE'S A MINUTE
ST. BART'S

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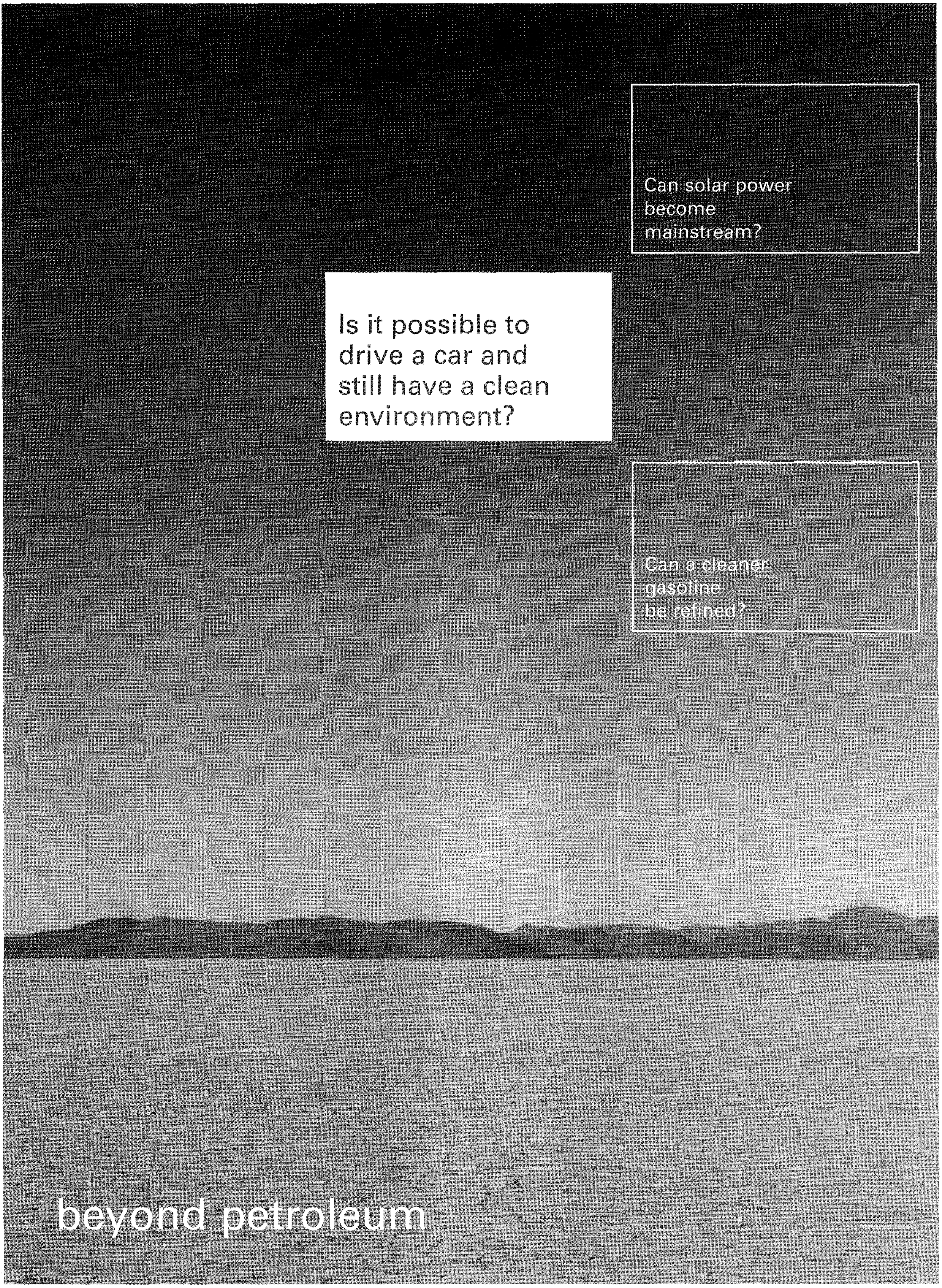

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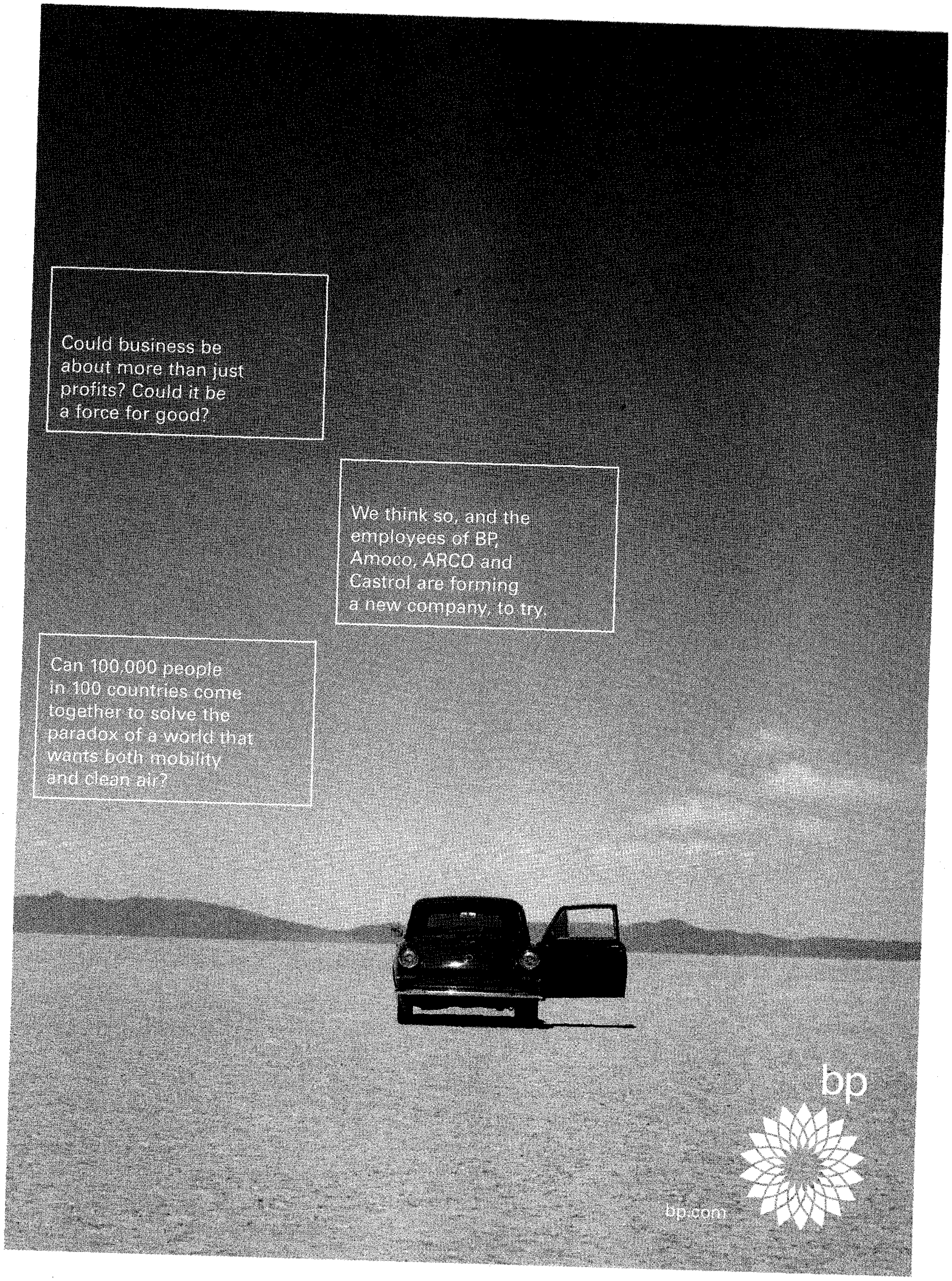

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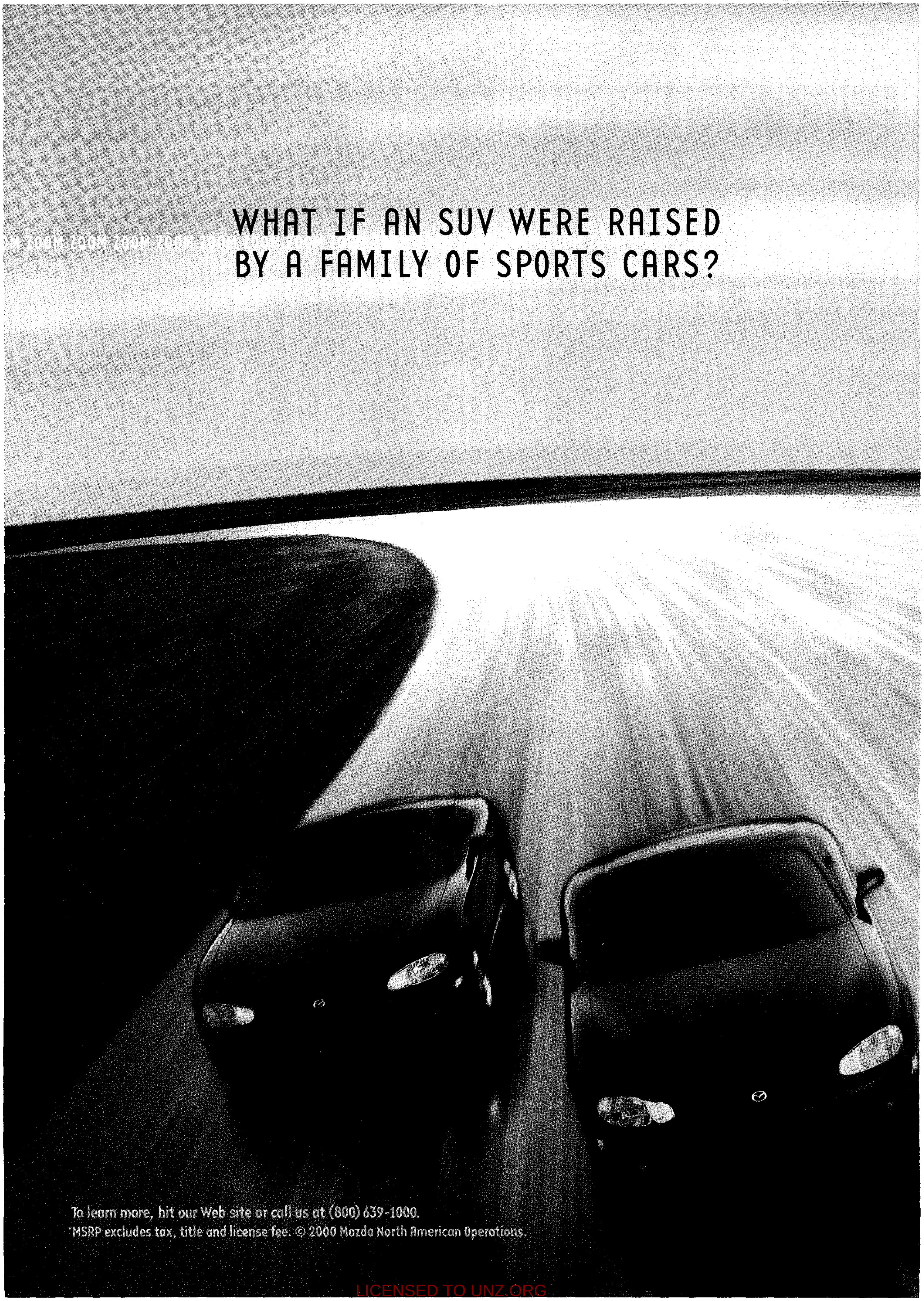
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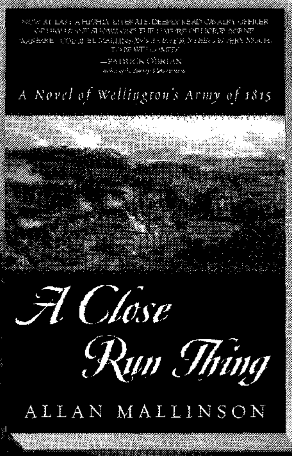

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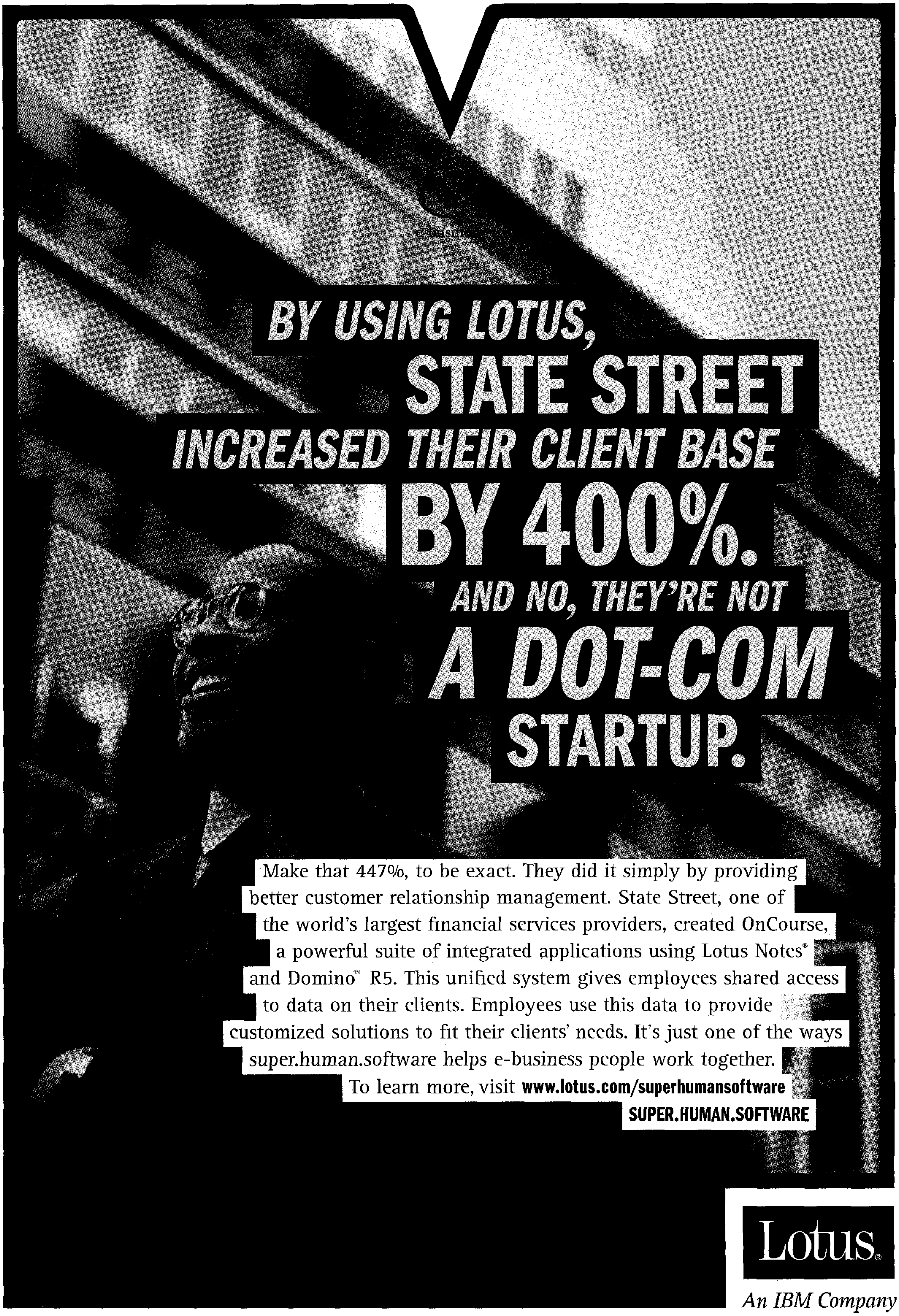

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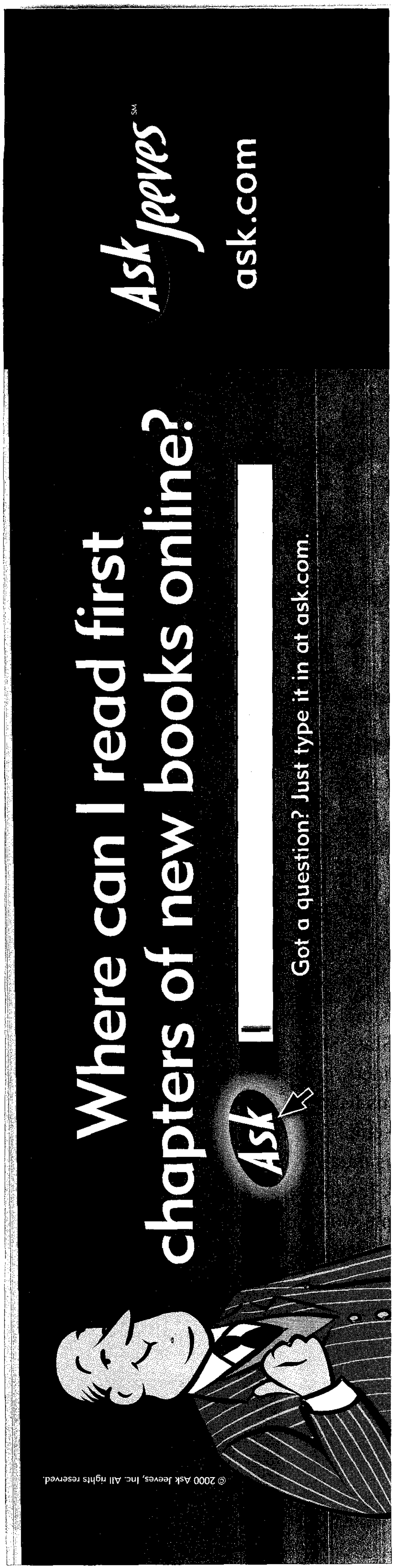
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CONTRIBUTORS

Calvin Tomkins ("The Tennis Artist," p. 52) is the author of twelve books, including "Living Well Is the Best Revenge" and "Duchamp: A Biography."

Alec Wilkinson ("A Hole in the Ground," p. 64) has been a contributor since 1980. His first book, "Midnights: A Year with the Wellfleet Police," has just been reissued.

J. Robert Lennon (Fiction, p. 74) is working on an opera with the composer Dana Wilson. His third novel, "On the Night Plain," will be published next spring.

Adam Gopnik (Books, p. 82) has been a staff writer since 1986. "Paris to the Moon," a collection of his *New Yorker* Paris Journals, will be published in October.

Paul Goldberger (The Sky Line, p. 90) is the magazine's architecture critic.

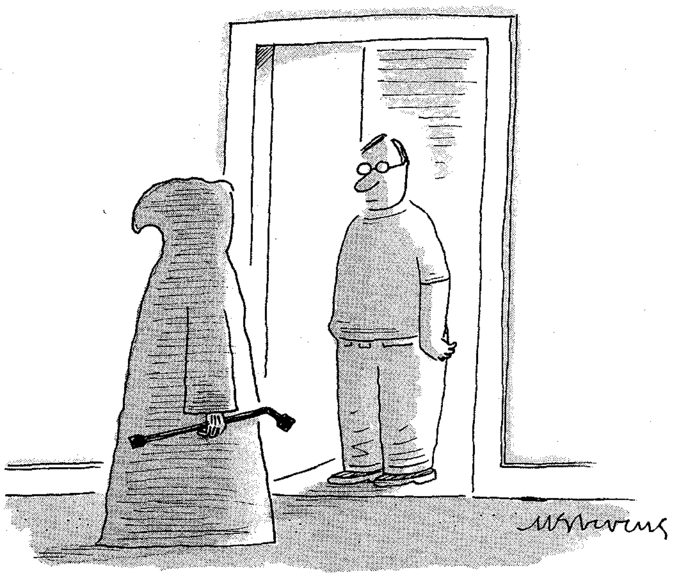
Mary Karr ("The Hot Dark," p. 42) is the author of "The Liars' Club," a memoir, and of three volumes of poetry. Her new memoir, "Cherry," comes out this month.

Henry Alford (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 41) is writing an E-book about his search for the funniest person on the Internet.

David Denby (The Current Cinema, p. 88) is a film critic for the magazine and the author of "Great Books."

Art Spiegelman (Comix, p. 62) has co-edited a comic book for children entitled "Little Lit," which will be published in October. He is currently working on a music-theatre piece entitled "Drawn to Death: A Three-Panel Opera."

Arnold Roth (The Back Page, p. 96) is a cartoonist and has been a contributor since 1992. ♦



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THE MAIL

WHO IS AL GORE?

No matter what Al Gore does, he is doomed. When he keeps the press at a distance, he incurs its wrath. When he grants a journalist like Nicholas Lemann a lengthy interview ("Gore Without a Script," July 31st) and avoids the usual bland rhetoric, his virtues are converted to faults: he is an intelligent abstract thinker (a lofty egghead), sincere (a condescending moralist), and hardworking (too eager to please). Each gesture, even the fact that Gore apparently bites his nails in private, becomes the subject of a Hitchcockian play-by-play account. Lemann makes me pity all modern Presidential candidates.
Chris Norlin
Los Angeles, Calif.

At first, Lemann's article depressed me. Although I'd read about the Vice-President's lack of spontaneity before, Lemann's presentation was devastating. But then he allowed Gore to riff. Suddenly, I saw a brilliant Tom Stoppard character, a man honestly trying to understand why we're here and what it's all about. And he's running against a man who's given no serious thought to much of anything.
M. J. Rosenberg
Chevy Chase, Md.

Lemann's account of his interview with Gore left me more frightened by the Vice-President's disconnected abstractions than reassured about his intelligence. If the extended quotes were meant as evidence of a great mind at work, they failed. Something—a connection to human reality, perhaps—is sorely lacking.
Ron Brandstetter
Portland, Oreg.

DOCTORS UNDER FIRE

The incompetence Atul Gawande describes ("When Good Doctors Go Bad," August 7th) is but one result of the medical profession's tendency to infuse its members with an exalted sense of self. From the moment medical students walk into their first class, they are treated as the anointed. Why is it that physicians who are going through a divorce or an illness expect special dispensation? Why should revoking a dangerous doctor's right to practice be any more emotionally charged than revoking the license of a dangerous truck driver? I have no pity for the physicians in Gawande's article. My sympathies are entirely with the patients who trusted them.
Susan M. Fitzpatrick
Elizabeth City, N.C.

As a physician, I'm all too familiar with the everyday pressures that can cause a doctor to go bad: the deadening effect of an escalating volume of patients, the worry about generating enough revenue to meet costs and earn a reasonable living, and the irritability and exhaustion that come from having too many demands on one's sympathy, time, and expertise. Although I do not fear that I'll commit the kind of gross medical error Gawande describes, I still must caution myself not to rush, to keep my patients' best interests foremost, and not to abdicate my clinical judgment to an insurance industry eager to play doctor.
Rebecca Kurth, M.D.
New York City

CORRECTION: "When Good Doctors Go Bad" referred to a case involving a senior internist whose wife was dying of cancer. We have since learned that the account, which was published in the *American Journal of Medicine*, was fictional, although the journal did not indicate this to its readers. We regret the error.

•

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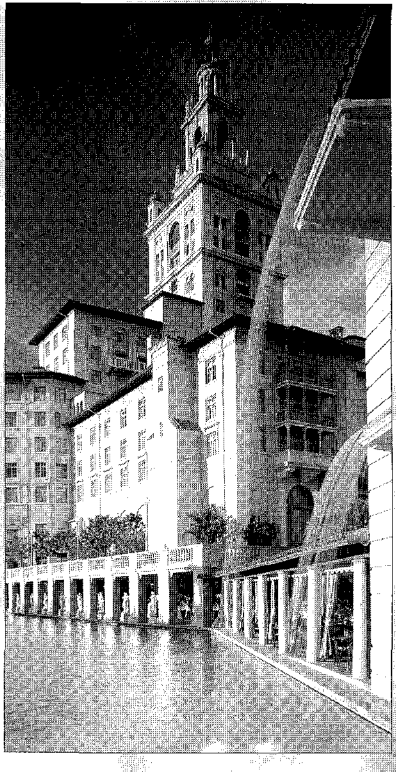

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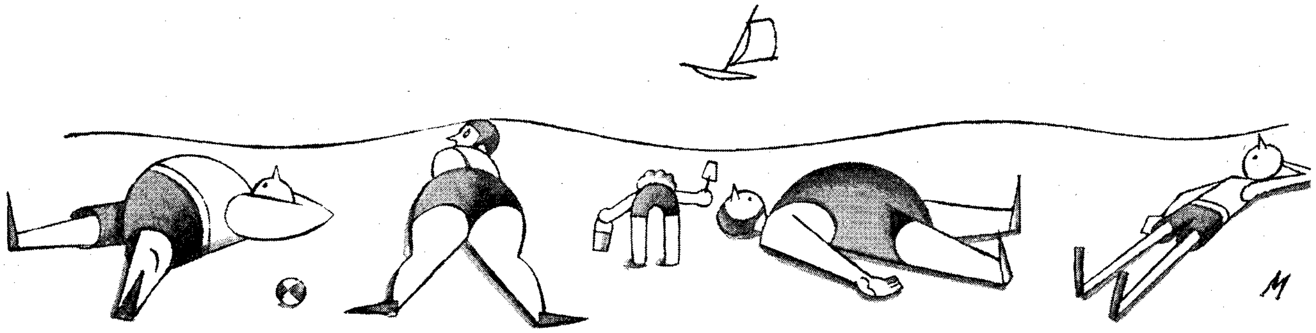

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS & PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AND GOD CREATED GREAT WHALES
An encore engagement of Rinde Eckert's musical-theatre work, in which a composer with a degenerative disease struggles to finish an opera based on "Moby Dick." Staged by the Foundry Theatre. In previews. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.)

BLITHE SPIRIT
Noel Coward's 1941 comedy is the Pearl Theatre Company's season opener. Previews begin Aug. 31. (80 St. Mark's Pl. 598-9802.)

GORE VIDAL'S THE BEST MAN
A revival of Vidal's 1960 political drama, starring Charles Durning, Spalding Gray, Chris Noth, Elizabeth Ashley, Christine Ebersole, and Michael Learned, among others. Directed by Ethan McSweeny. Previews begin Sept. 5. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

QUEEN ESTHER: UNEMPLOYED SUPERSTAR
A one-woman musical comedy, in which the singer and actress examines issues of race, gender, and power. Fridays at 8:30, through Sept. 8. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

SIGNATURE THEATRE COMPANY
This year the company presents a season of new plays by various authors, beginning with "A Lesson Before Dying," Romulus Linney's stage adaptation of the novel by Ernest J. Gaines. Previews begin Sept. 5. (555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

WHERE EVERYTHING IS EVERYTHING
Daisy Eagan and Paul Sparks portray a shy graphic designer and a brash financial consultant, in a romance by Stephen Spoonamore. In previews. (New York Performance Works, 128 Chambers St. 539-8892.)

OPENED RECENTLY

AIDA
Disney's new musical—five years in the making and a product of Pharaonic expense—is, if not perfect, a lively, polished entertainment with bursts of joyful flamboyance worthy of its composer, Elton John. The two female leads—Heather Headley, as Aida, and Sherie René Scott, as Amneris—shine in their different ways, and Bob Crowley's brilliant sets give the show both visual dazzle and emotional resonance. (Reviewed in our issue of 4/10/00.) (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.)

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AQUILA THEATRE COMPANY
The British-American touring troupe continues its New York residency with Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac." (Clark Studio, Lincoln Center. 279-4200. Closes Sept. 17.)

BAAL
The Bat Theatre Company's version of Brecht's first play. (The Flea, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-2407. Closes Sept. 2.)

BERLIN TO BROADWAY WITH KURT WEILL
A revue celebrating the composer's career, starring Lorinda Lisitza, Bjørn Olsson, Michael Winther, and Veronica Mittenzwei. (The Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 279-4200.)

CAPITOL STEPS
The musical-theatre troupe's latest political satire, "It Ain't Over 'Til the First Lady Sings." (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

CHICAGO CITY LIMITS
The improv company presents a new revue, "Chicago City Limits Turns 20: Now and Forever . . . and We Mean It." (Chicago City Limits Theatre, 1105 First Ave., at 61st St. 888-5233.)

COPENHAGEN
Michael Frayn's play speculates on the controversial 1941 reunion of the two giants of quantum mechanics—the physicists Niels Bohr (Philip Bosco) and Werner Heisenberg (Michael Cumpsty). It is so meticulous, so admirable, and so grave that you want to tousle its well-kempt appearance and tell it to lighten up. Nevertheless, the director, Michael Blakemore, manages to make dynamic and suggestive an evening that consists of three actors (Blair Brown plays Margrethe Bohr) and three chairs. (4/24 & 5/1/00) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE CRADLE WILL ROCK
The Jean Cocteau Rep opens the season with Marc Blitzstein's 1937 labor-movement musical. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

THE CRUMPLE ZONE
A dark comedy by Buddy Thomas, set during a Christmas gathering of five gay men. (Rattlestick Theatre, 224 Waverly Pl. 206-1515. Closes Sept. 10.)

DIRTY BLONDE
Mae West's flirty and dirty persona is the subject of a cunningly written, raffish evening conceived by the writer-actress Claudia Shear and the director James Lapine. Mae's story is recounted with brio by two fans—Jo (Shear, who doubles winningly as Mae) and Charlie (Tom Riis Farrell).The success of the play rests not on the louche facts of West's life but on the intersection of her story with the sweetness of the evolving relationship between the two lost souls who narrate it. (2/7/00) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

DON JUAN IN HELL
Donal Donnelly, Celeste Holm, James A. Stephens, and Fritz Weaver give a dramatic reading of the third-act dream scene from Shaw's "Man and Superman," under the direction of Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Sept. 17.)

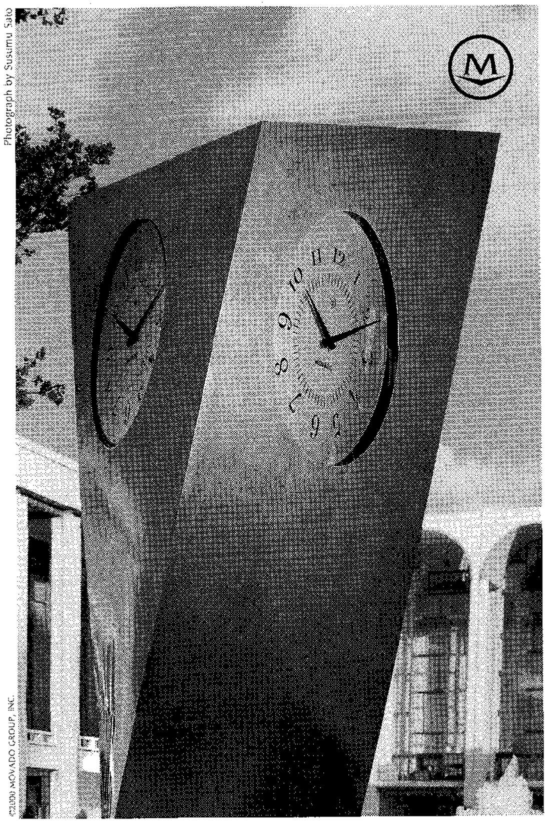
GODSPELL
An updated version of the 1971 rock musical, with music and new lyrics by Stephen Schwartz. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 239-6200.)

HIGH INFIDELITY
In John Dooley's comedy, John Davidson and Morgan Fairchild star as a Presidential candidate and his wife, who are forced to participate in marriage counselling by their political party. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

IMPERFECT CHEMISTRY
A musical comedy by Albert M. Tapper and James Racheff, about two geneticists at a philanthropic laboratory who are seduced into finding a cure for baldness. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave. between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES
A revue tracing the history of the musical form, which had its New York première at the New Victory Theatre in 1999. With Charles Bevel, Carter Calvert, Debra Laws, Gregory Porter, Cheryl Alexander, and Michael Mandell. Jim Ehinger is the musical director. (B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, 243 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

THE JERUSALEM SYNDROME
There's no hell like being a seer in modern times, but it's a burden that the mystically neurotic, hyperintelligent comic Marc Maron gladly bears in order to make us laugh. He's fully aware of all the dubious idols that have replaced God in our culture, and he pulls no punches in pointing them out. In his one-man show, a heartbreakingly funny, faux-naïf travelogue, he leads the audience into purgatory and back, as he tries to find some kind of spiritual resonance in Hollywood fame, cigarettes, the Wiz, Coke (and coke), and Israel, where, he claims, he just wasn't "Jewy" enough to achieve the transcendence the land offers to the less materialistic. (On a plane headed for the Holy Land, he informs a rabbi that he's brought along a Sony camcorder to document his inevitable transformation. The rabbi's response? "I could have



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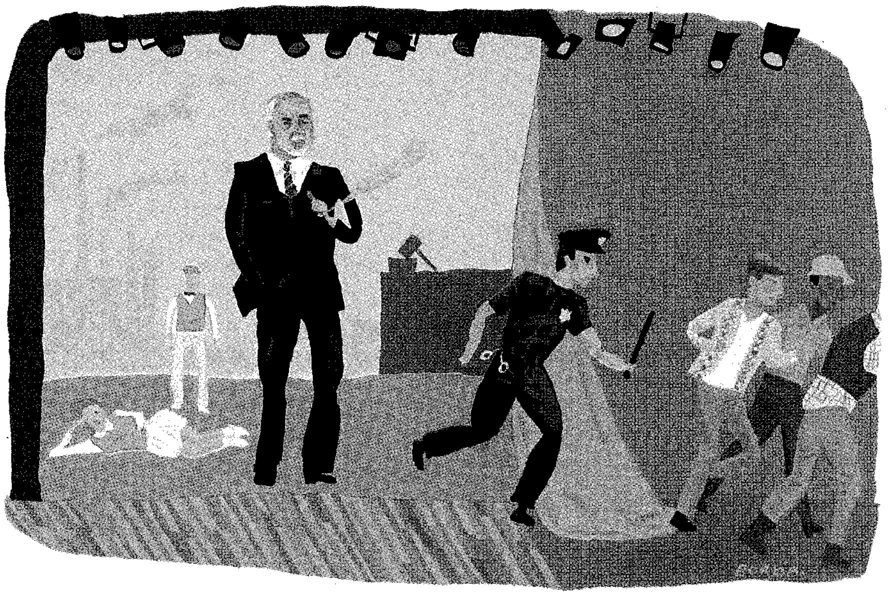
gotten you a better deal.") Maron may not be the Messiah, but he's definitely the guy to tell you where you won't find Him. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391.)

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR
This misguided Broadway revival of Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1971 musical version of the Saviour's last days on earth starts out by asking the tantalizing question "What's the buzz?" but never delivers a theatrically satisfying answer. Still, with its archaic whiff of right-wing outrage and its singable seventies-rock score, it's fun for nostalgia's sake. (Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 43rd St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 3.)

JITNEY
August Wilson's play is set in a car-service station in 1977, in a part of Pittsburgh which is being demolished faster than it's being renovated. In this atmosphere of decay, Wilson's characters struggle with themselves and with one another to find some hope, and some peace, amidst the rubble. The cast of nine wonderful actors hit perfect notes of collision and cohesion, and turn what might otherwise be a draggy experience (the play runs to nearly three hours) into a riveting and moving one. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)



"The Cradle Will Rock," by Marc Blitzstein, staged by Jean Cocteau Rep.

JOE FEARLESS (A FAN DANCE)
A great and irresistible idea—above-the-rim basketball choreographed for the stage—attached to a goofy melodrama, in which the title character loses his job, wife, kids, and even his TV as a result of his fanatical devotion to his team. The basketball overshadows the drama, which takes place smack in the middle of the games (literally: the alley-oop passes sail right over the TV-room couch). But the athlete-actors pull off Globetrotter high jinks right on cue, the cheerleaders dance with exaggerated licentiousness, and the accompanying jock interviews and talk-radio postmortems are both on target and hilariously over the top. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 3.)

JULIUS CAESAR
Barry Edelstein directs a cast led by David McCallum, Jeffrey Wright, Jamey Sheridan, and Dennis Boutsikaris in the New York Shakespeare Festival's second outdoor production of the season. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 539-8750. Closes Sept. 3.)

THE LARAMIE PROJECT
The story of the gay-hate murder of Matthew Shepard and its media-saturated aftermath, told from the points of view of Laramie, Wyoming, residents—a gay activist, a Baptist preacher, a storekeeper, a sheriff, a bartender, and others, all performed by a virtuoso cast of eight. Members of Moisés Kaufman's Tectonic Theatre Company conducted some two hundred interviews about the murder; the play's text consists of excerpts of those interviews, of court transcripts, and of journals kept by company members. Unlike Kaufman's 1997 "Gross Indecency," which offered a fresh perspective on the oft-told tale of Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, this play, by refusing to make a judgment, simply retells a familiar story. Nonetheless, the heart-wrenching experiences and flashes of insight do open a window on the human tragedy, despite the overwhelming objectification surrounding it. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 2.)

THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER
The Roundabout's revival of Kaufman and Hart's evergreen 1939 satire of Hollywood and of New York literary society is pure gold. Nathan Lane is back onstage where he belongs, playing Sheridan Whiteside, a noxiously pompous critic and radio personality who commandeers the bewildered family and staff of a staid Ohio household—where he slipped on ice after a dinner in his honor and ended up in a wheelchair. Lane is hilarious as he spins around the stage, dressed in an elegant smoking jacket and barking orders and insults between puffs of cigarette and international phone calls. The play itself is a model of comic construction and is chock-full of vintage stage business, which the excellent cast executes with gleeful nineteen-forties snap. Jean Smart, Byron Jennings, and Lewis J. Stadlen, as three famous personalities who pop in for a visit, are all brilliant. With terrific sets and costumes by Tony Walton and William Ivey Long, respectively. Jerry Zaks is the director. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

THE MUSIC MAN
A delightful revival of Meredith Willson's 1957 musical, directed by Susan Stroman and starring Craig Bierko, who is making his Broadway début in the role of Professor Harold Hill. The show hits us with the simplicity and seamlessness of a perfect fairy tale, and it puts music in its proper place—right up there with all the other miracles of life. (5/22/00) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

NEIL SIMON'S HOTEL SUITE
The setups for these reheated fragments from Simon's "Suite" plays have the feel of stale seventies sitcoms, but they rate high on the middle-aged crowd's Laff-O-Meter and capture, however unwittingly, the innocence and humor of decades past. The cast (Helen Carey, Randy Graff, Leigh Lawson, Ron Orbach, Charlie McWade, and Amanda Serkasevich) all shine in their own ways. (Gramercy Theatre, 127 E. 23rd St. 307-4100. Closes Sept. 3.)

NEVER SWIM ALONE
In Daniel MacIvor's tersely orchestrated dark comedy, two pinstripe-wearing, briefcase-carrying, cliché-blaring businessmen who've been friends and playmates since boyhood face off as adults for twelve rounds of friendly male competition (who's taller, better at his job, better endowed, etc.). The boasts and thinly veiled insults become increasingly vicious and destructive with each round, knowingly refereed by a woman who turns out to be an early casualty of their lifelong contest, a ghost from their past. The play lacks essential narrative drama, but it's a surprisingly powerful examination of the dangers of male rivalry, and the three very good young actors (Douglas Dickerman, John Maria, and Susan O'Connor) give it a beguiling richness. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

RIVERDANCE
The Irish troupe of dancers, singers, and musicians. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER
John Travolta is not easy to replace, nor are the ashes of disco fever likely to reignite, as this show, based on the 1977 movie, demonstrates. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

SOUL OF AN INTRUDER
A psychological thriller by Steve Braunstein, about a triangle between a woman and two of her former lovers, who come back into her life at the same time. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 279-4200.)

SPINNING INTO BUTTER
Rebecca Gilman's surprising, well-crafted play about a racist incident at a mostly white Vermont liberal-arts college, where, as one character puts it, "not being racist means you got along really well with your nanny." When someone pins a hate letter on the door of one of the school's only black students, the administration stumbles around in a comically paranoid, disturbing stupor, trying to keep the public-relations lid on and obliviously applying righteous public-forum Band-Aids to a gaping social wound. The drama is subtle, yet more powerful than it seems at first: the audience never meets the wronged black student, and the only honest feelings about racial divisiveness are expressed out of range of the censoring ear of inept authority. Hope Davis, who delivers a genuinely troubled monologue as a dean of students, leads the fine cast. Daniel Sullivan is the director. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Sept. 16.)

SWING
No plot, just a hot band, Olympic-class dancers, and major panties—this show, a tribute to swing and its dance counterpart, the Lindy (mother of the jitterbug), lives up to its name. Directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

WHY WE DON'T BOMB THE AMISH
A one-woman comedy skewering cultural hypocrisies, written and performed by Casey Fraser, and accompanied by a band performing jazz, blues, funk, and hard-core punk. (Gershwin Hotel, 7 E. 27th St. 279-4200.)

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.

CATS
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. (Closes Sept. 10.)

CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

CONTACT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.

THE COUNTESS
Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.

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DINNER WITH FRIENDS
Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.

THE FANTASTICKS
Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY
Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.

FOSSE
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

FULLY COMMITTED
Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

JEKYLL & HYDE
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

KISS ME, KATE
Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.

LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.

MISS SAIGON
Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.

PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477.

TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.

THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

DOWNTOWN DANCE FESTIVAL
The last hurrah of the summer's free dance festivals, on the lawn at Battery Park. Aug. 28 at noon: Battery Dance Company. ♦ Aug. 29 at noon: Zig Zag Ballet. ♦ Aug. 30 at noon: Le Minh Tam Dance. ♦ Aug. 31 at noon: Gabriel Masson Dance. (For more information, call 807-6480.)

NIGHT LIFE CONCERTS

"NICKELODEON ALL THAT MUSIC & MORE FESTIVAL"
A rosy-faced, G-rated evening of pubescent pop featuring **LFO** (a.k.a. Lyte Funky Ones), a decidedly light if only moderately funky vocal group from the same Orlando factory that gave the world N' Sync and the Backstreet Boys; **Blaque,** a harmony-heavy female vocal trio discovered by TLC; and **B*Witched,** a quartet from Ireland which has been called the Irish Spice Girls. (Jones Beach Theatre. 516-221-1000. Aug. 31-Sept. 1 at 5.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

ARLENE GROCERY
95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—A narrow, dimly lit renovated bodega that's the ideal environment for three to five unknown bands a night struggling their way out of obscurity. Sept 2: Singer-songwriter **Mark Geary** has been a regular on the downtown scene since he left his home town of Dublin some six years ago. His songs are lyrical takes on the passing moments of each day, and he brings to the stage the quiet confidence of a traveller.

LE BATEAU IVRE
230 E. 51st St. (583-0579)—"One must be a seer," wrote Arthur Rimbaud. And the sidewalk tables at this inspired bistro are an ideal spot to follow his advice: "The poet makes himself a seer by an immense, long, deliberate derangement of all the senses." An attractive crowd gathers as the light fades, choosing from a wine list that offers more than a hundred varieties by the glass and another hundred and fifty by the bottle. Divination awaits you like the summer dawn.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
243 W. 42nd St. (269-4849)—Sept. 1: **Clarence (Gatemouth) Brown.** Like virtually every other Texas blues guitarist of the past half-century, the seventy-six-year-old Brown owes much to T-Bone Walker. Unlike his fellow-disciples, Brown has always sought to expand the vocabulary of the blues, mixing in elements of country, Cajun, and jazz. And when he picks up that electric fiddle, watch out.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Aug. 30: A night of wise-guy retro swing with **Dem Brooklyn Bums.** Sept. 2: Thanks to his custom-built eight-string guitar and a few choice effects, **Charlie Hunter** single-handedly creates sounds last heard in the mid-sixties on, say, a Big John Patton organ-trio disk.

BROWNIES
169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Sept. 1: **U.V. Ray,** the new drum-and-bass project headed by the former Soul Coughing rhythm section, Sebastian Steinberg and Yuval Gabay. With the smart, lyrical underground rap of the **Anti-Pop Consortium.** Sept. 2: San Francisco's **Starlight Mints** uses the stuff of traditional rock and roll (guitar, bass, drums), as well as a few higher-end ingredients (violin, cello), to create sweet and long-lasting sonic confections. With **Enon,** a band comprised of former Brainiac guitarist John Schmersal and Skeleton Key percussionists Rick Lee and Steve Calhoon.

CBGB & OMFUG
315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—A narrow, graffiti-strewn cave packed every evening with new and used bands. ♦ Next door, at CB's Gallery, singer-songwriter **Kevin McClusky** takes over on Aug. 31.

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—**Drums and Tuba,** a highly infectious trio, drops by on Aug. 30. The band—which includes a guitar in addition to the two nominal instruments—laces its loop-filled songs with New Orleans-style grooves. The resulting soundscapes are long, intricate, and often hypnotic; the bellowing of the tuba and the ferocious, trancelike drumming become pleasantly overwhelming. Sept. 1: The complicated and accomplished British songwriter **Kevin Coyne** has more than thirty albums to his name, but since he's spent the last fifteen years camped out in Germany, he's not exactly well known here. It's a pity: his shows, like his albums, are amusing, acerbic displays of the long-term effects of the rock-and-roll life style. Sept. 1-3: The **Anti-Pop Consortium** (see Brownies).

LIVING ROOM
84 Stanton St. (533-7235)—Sept. 5: In the early nineties, the smoky-voiced singer **John Carlin** achieved minor celebrity as the front man for the alternative-rock outfit 700 Miles, which had two albums out on RCA, but his recent self-produced work is both more sophisticated and more rewarding. Carlin will be here on Tuesdays throughout the month.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Sept. 3: **Kevin Coyne** (see the Knitting Factory). Sept. 4: **Enon** (see Brownies).

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Aug. 31: The **Realistics** came together two years ago, when its

Drums and Tuba, at the Knitting Factory.

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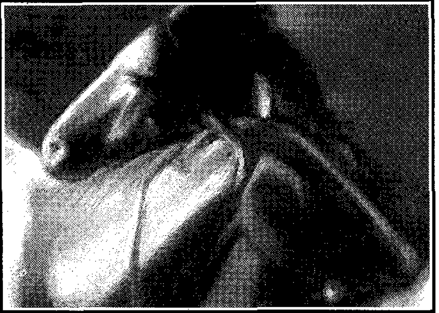

MARK SPRAGG

"A piercing voice from the heartland...weds the venerable Western tradition of frontier exploration of self and nature with the masculine school of writing stretching from Hemingway to Mailer."

–*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

"A book that deserves many readers." –Larry McMurtry

"A discovery." –*Big Sky Journal*

"Here is a book for women to read to learn the hearts of men. Here is a book for men to read to curse what they have lost."

–Terry Tempest Williams

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members were in high school, but its music reaches back much further, to the harmonic organ pop of the early sixties. **Radio 4** does a fine job of updating the post-punk sounds of the Clash and Gang of Four.

WETLANDS
161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Seattle's **Laura Love** and her band are here on Aug. 30. Imagine the melodies of Irish music riding atop the busy rhythms of funk and jazz, and you'll have some idea of the sound that this talented bass-playing singer-songwriter calls "Afro-Celtic." Her latest release, "Fourteen Days," is one of this year's strongest.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Whether blending his tenor sax with the Mingus Big Band, Kip Hanrahan, Kenny Barron, or Abdullah Ibrahim, **John Stubblefield** (here Aug. 30) can be counted on to make music that doesn't stint on smarts or passion. He's paired with another versatile powerhouse player, trumpeter **Virgil Jones.** Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Sept. 3: **Chick Corea,** a stylist whose nineteen-sixties and seventies work is still being dissected and emulated by younger generations, is experiencing a midlife creative resurgence. The success of his formidable acoustic band, Origin, has been reflected in Corea's own playing: two recent solo albums find him as playful and adventurous as ever. This rare solo appearance should be a treat.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—In Bemelmans Bar, **Peter Mintun** is in attendance through Oct. 14.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (339-4095)—Through Sept. 2: **Marc Salem's** "Mind Games and All That Jazz." Salem, a former New York University professor and a onetime researcher for "Sesame Street," moves his mind-reading act, which had a successful off-Broadway run a few years back, to this intimate cabaret space, adding an all-female trio to the show.

FEZ
380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The **Mingus Big Band** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Sept. 3: The **Antonio Hart** quartet. A change of horns can sometimes do wonders for a player. Switching from alto saxophone to tenor has opened up expansive new vistas for Hart, and having the splendid young drummer **Nasheet Waits** on hand never hurt any aspiring leader. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Sept. 1-3: The **Sonny Fortune** quartet. "In the Spirit of John Coltrane," an outstanding tribute recording by Fortune, proves that this quadruple threat (he plays tenor, alto, and soprano saxophones as well as the flute) is as primed for action as he's ever been in his now five-decade career. Though Coltrane's spirit still inspires Fortune, he remains his own man. Dining.

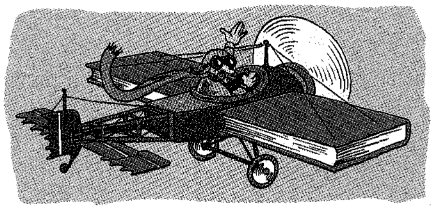
KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Sept. 4: Few musicians understand the thorny and rewarding compositions of Thelonious Monk as well as the soprano-saxophone master **Steve Lacy,** who has spent his entire career delving into their knotty crevices. **Irene Aebi,** Lacy's vocalist wife, will join him in a duet setting, giving this imperishable music yet another new spin.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ
351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Sept. 1-3: The **Vincent Herring**

BOOK CURRENTS

A Wing and a Prayer

It has been almost exactly a century since Wilbur and Orville Wright carried out their first field experiments, dragging an unmanned glider, kite-style, across the sky. In letters, Wilbur wrote of his belief "that flight is possible to man," and feared that his obsession would cost him "an increased amount of money if not [his] life." Wilbur was wrong—he died of typhoid in 1912—but his passion infected others. One early aviator, Samuel Cody, Jr., shot apples off the heads of assistants in Wild West shows before settling in England and becoming one of Britain's first pilots. **COLONEL CODY AND THE FLYING CATHEDRAL,** by Garry Jenkins (Picador), paints Cody as a clown—even a grisly 1913 collision with a cow was treated as entertainment. Yet his death soon after, at the controls of a hydroplane, earned him a state funeral with a hundred thousand mourners.



By the time the rebellious American heiress Pancho Barnes took to the skies, in 1928, the golden age of flight was well under way. Lauren Kessler's **THE HAPPY BOTTOM RIDING CLUB** (Random House) establishes that flight was only one form of Barnes's daredevilry: also famous as a lover, a drinker, and a brawler (she once punched out Eric von Stroheim), Barnes confessed that piloting made her feel "like a sex maniac in a whorehouse." **LOOPING THE LOOP: POSTERS OF FLIGHT,** by Henry Serrano Villard et al. (Kales), is a portfolio of color posters for early air shows, commercial routes, and military flights. One of the most famous images—of an airman releasing roses high above Nice's harbor—captures the elation that the Italian poet Gabriele D'Annunzio described when first airborne. "Until now I have never really lived," he wrote. "Life on earth is a creeping, crawling business."

—*Leo Carey*

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Books.
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Meet the Perfect Weekend Companions

THE HEARTSONG OF CHARGING ELK

by James Welch

This haunting tale follows an Oglala Sioux Indian as he journeys from his tribal life in the Black Hills of South Dakota to the back streets of nineteenth-century Marseille. Traversing the cultural and geographical distance, he falls into a series of unexpected events and learns shocking lessons that transform his very existence. (Doubleday)

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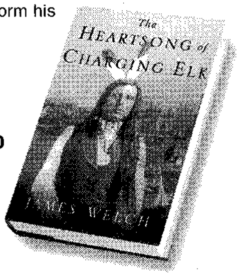

AN OBVIOUS ENCHANTMENT

by Tucker Malarkey

This captivating debut novel of love and faith traces the path of Ingrid Holtz as she searches for her enigmatic professor who has disappeared while trying to uncover a legend about an ancient African king. As she becomes entangled in her pursuit, Ingrid realizes that she does not truly know the man who has come to haunt her dreams. (Random House)

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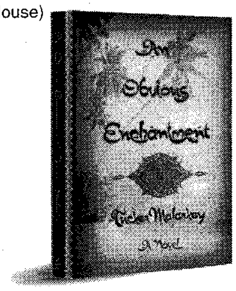

ONE HEART

by Jane McCafferty

This poignant story centers on Gladys and Ivy, two middle-aged sisters bonded by a lifetime of love and loneliness, yet separated by a wall of silence. Their lives are suddenly disrupted by the arrival of a mysterious young woman who whisks Gladys away on a journey of discovery that teaches both sisters the importance of family and the act of confronting deeply hidden emotions. (Perennial)

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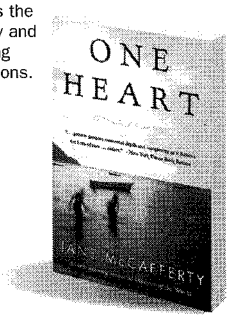

L.I.E.

by David Hollander

The Long Island Expressway (L.I.E.) serves as the backdrop for this tale of a high school graduate who undergoes the usual rites of passage on his way to adulthood. Ten humorous, dark stories crisscross against an American landscape both familiar and exotic that spans one young man's search for identity. (Villard)

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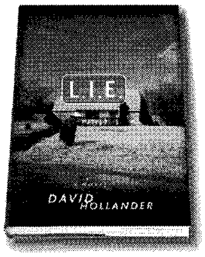

MISS JULIA SPEAKS HER MIND

by Ann B. Ross

In the vein of *Steel Magnolias* and *Driving Miss Daisy*, this charming novel of Southern sensibility strikes a perfect balance between down-home practicality and airy frivolity with its quirky characters, light comedy and appealing melodrama. The action is non-stop as Miss Julia suddenly finds herself in the middle of a scandal, as well as the reluctant guardian of the illegitimate son of her late husband. (Perennial)

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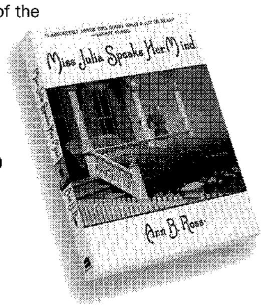

IN THE DRINK

by Kate Christensen

Claudia Steiner, a depressed yet hopeful heroine, tries to stay afloat in her unsteady little lifeboat in New York City as she copes with a thankless ghostwriting job, a tiny, roach-infested apartment, a one-sided love affair, and an insatiable taste for whiskey. Somehow, she manages to hold on to her sanity and reclaim her belief in herself. (Anchor Books)

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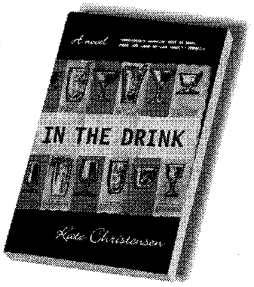

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quartet. Working with authentic hard-bop heroes like Nat Adderley and Horace Silver has given saxophonist Herring an edge that can be heard in each of his ardent improvisations. In his hands, the jazz tradition gets a nice buff job.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Sept. 3: The **Jacky Terrason** quartet. With more and more young pianists for whom idiosyncratic playing is a mark of honor on the scene today, Terrason doesn't sound quite as startling as he did when he won the 1993 Thelonious Monk Competition. He's expanding his trio to a quartet with the addition of a saxophonist, and he now doubles on the fashionable electric piano, but Terrason's old near-mind-meld interaction with the drummer **Leon Parker** is still intact. The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra holds sway on Mondays.

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MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—The museum's entire collection of works by Maurice Prendergast (1858-1924), who was once hailed as "the poet laureate of the picnic," are exhibited together for the first time. Though the seventy pictures range from quick pencil and watercolor jottings to labored oils, the subject is always the same: happy throngs of anonymous pedestrians with their parasols, pinafores, and perambulators. When American prosperity was a delightful new condition, these sunny idylls must have looked soothing and fresh. A century later, their subject matter seems saccharine, their technique a watered-down combination of Fauvist and Nabi styles. What endures is Prendergast's innocence. It's strangely comforting to imagine today's rollerbladers and day traders depicted with those same benign pats of pink, olive, and blue. Through Oct. 22. ♦ Jean-Siméon Chardin devoted himself to simple still-lifes and domestic scenes, creamy works of such beauty that the philosopher Diderot was moved to write, "The magic is incomprehensible." The painter captures his human subjects in moments of quiet reverie, and the show, the first such retrospective to hit New York, casts a similar spell. On the whole, his work is marked by a grace and dignity that reveal the miraculous in the everyday. Through Sept. 3. ♦ "Paughtraits," as he dubbed them, made John Singer Sargent famous, but he was testy about the genre. "I abhor and abjure them, and hope never to do another, especially of the Upper Classes," he wrote to a fellow painter. He would, one imagines, have been delighted by **"Beyond the Portrait Studio,"** an exhibition of his landscapes and works on paper, most of them donated to the museum half a century ago by the artist's sister. The hundred or so images on view show Sargent at his amazing best and embarrassing worst, from his dazzling watercolors of sunlit brooks to his sentimental homoerotic scenes of English soldiers sunbathing. Among the most astonishing images are the earliest: at fourteen, Sargent's technical facility was already eerie, with a mechanical precision that cools one's exhilaration. Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—**"Making Choices."** The twenty-four-part show concentrates on works made between 1920 and 1960, drawn exclusively from the museum's extensive holdings, in a series of tightly focussed exhibitions, several devoted to a single artist (Man Ray, Cartier-Bresson, Morandi). Closing, in stages, on Sept. 19 and Sept. 26. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—**"1900: Art at the Crossroads"** reopens a sort of art-world time capsule, contrasting representative works from the movements that took shape at the beginning of the past century. Through Sept. 10. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—**"The Art of Alice Neel."** The artist (1900-84) enjoyed little critical success for most of her career, which took her from Cuba to Greenwich Village to Spanish Harlem before landing her a guest spot with Johnny Carson in the seventies. Neel had long turned to friends and family as subjects (one of the show's highlights is an early portrait of bohemian gadfly Joe Gould which gives new meaning to the phrase "well endowed"). But in the late fifties, allegedly at the suggestion of her therapist, she began inviting art-world figures like poet-critic Frank O'Hara and then-painter Robert Smithson to sit for her, donning the mantle of artist's artist. The tidal wave of Abstract Expressionism had crested, and the renewed interest in the figure worked to the advantage of an artist who had never veered from realism. Neel's warts-and-all approach is a far cry from the glamorizing of that other great American portraitist, Sargent, but, while her portraits rarely flatter the sitter, their intensity and intimacy are unrivalled. Through Sept. 17. ♦ **"Carnival Strippers: Photographs by Susan Meiselas."** A Magnum photographer best known for her harrowing depictions of ravaged areas in Central America and Kurdistan, Meiselas began her career documenting a different kind of war zone—carnival striptease shows. In 1972, just one year after she started taking pictures, the artist spent the first of three summers travelling the circuit in rural New England. The strippers, from the days before silicone and StairMasters, look heartbreakingly real in these small black-and-white photographs. Then again, so do the customers: the slack-jawed rapture on the male faces in "Tentful of Marks" is vulnerability incarnate. Through Sept. 10. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT PHILIP MORRIS
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (878-2550)—**"Expanding Horizons"** is a sly show of landscape photographs which displays real scenes alongside constructed, artificial ones. The difference is often hard to distinguish. Sally Gall's luminous black-and-white bayou is so still that it looks like a stage set, while Hiroshi Sugimoto's animated underwater scene, one of the show's liveliest images, appears to predate photography by five hundred million years (it depicts a diorama of a primordial ocean in the Museum of Natural History). Vik Muniz pays homage to Robert Smithson's legendary conflation of nature and culture, "Spiral Jetty," by shooting a tabletop facsimile in his Brooklyn studio. Most confounding of all may be Emmet Gowin's aerial view of a toxic-water-treatment facility. The lyrically abstract image offers no hint of the plant's dangerous purpose. Through Oct. 6. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The Hayden Planetarium, in the glass-sheathed Rose Center, looks like what might have arisen if Sony had commissioned I. M. Pei to build the Centre Pompidou. Space Show tickets, designed as 3-D postcard-size "passports to the universe," let you enjoy a twenty-minute cosmic journey, narrated by Tom Hanks, which goes from Earth to the Milky Way out to the Virgo Supercluster, then through a black hole right back home. You can cruise the new building, size up exhibits that boggle the mind with postulations like "On this time line, each step you take is seventy-five million years long," and watch a mini star show that begins, "Hello and welcome to the big bang. I'm Jodie Foster." Reservations for regular Space Shows are advised, and available at 769-5200. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Passages: Photographs in Africa by Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher."** For three decades, this London-based duo has traversed Africa like Bedouins, documenting the continent's vanishing tribal ceremonies. (Last year their work garnered an Award of Excellence from the United Nations Society for Artists and Writers.) The subjects range from a Surma mating ritual-cum-fight club in Ethiopia to a Himba wedding in Namibia where the bride smears her body with ochre and perfumed butterfat. The large-scale images are stunning—nearly a hundred are on view—but the unfortunate installation design occasionally relegates Beckwith and Fisher's work to a mere backdrop for all the artifacts and videotapes. Through Sept. 17. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

POP NOTES

THIS ELECTRONIC WORLD
Ever since the birth of rock and roll, musicians have been seduced by the power of electricity. Once this meant a bigger amplifier; now it means joining forces with producers of dance and electronic music to create hybrid soundscapes that are half-man, half-machine.

At first glance, the résumé of the pedal steel guitarist BJ Cole couldn't be more conventional; he has backed middle-of-the-road pop stars for decades, from Elton John to Garth Brooks. But Cole also has an experimental side that flowers fully on his recent collaboration with the British drum-and-bass architect Luke Vibert. Cole should indulge himself more often: **"Stop the Panic"** (Astralwerks) is a resounding success, with his sinuous guitar meshing perfectly with Vibert's electronics to create propulsive music that is also faintly haunting. Part of the album's strength comes from the fact that Cole and Vibert collaborated on the compositions; the songs feel organically grown rather than assembled from parts.

The Master Musicians of Jajouka, an all-male Moroccan group that features the droning, hypnotic sounds of the ghaita (an instrument similar to the oboe), have long been in fashion among classic rockers. Members of the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin have flavored their records with appearances by the ancient ensemble, which William Burroughs once called a "four-thousand-year-old rock band." Now the Musicians have enlisted Talvin Singh, a producer who has worked with such artists as Madonna and Björk, for **"The Master Musicians of Jajouka"** (Point Music), which attempts to fuse their folk sounds with modern technology. But the album falls short, largely because Singh is too tentative; the group's sonics aren't updated in an interesting manner. Perhaps they're still smarting from the reaction to their 1971 album, "Brian Jones Presents the Pipes of Pan at Jajouka," which was criticized for its excessively psychedelic production.

Singh also appears, to better effect, on a new project called Tabla Beat Science, an ad-hoc ensemble produced by avant-pop stalwart Bill Laswell and featuring the tabla player Zakir Hussain. Hussain has been a lifelong popularizer of Indian music (in the seventies he co-founded the fusion group Shakti), and **"Tala Matrix"** (Axiom) demonstrates why, as it weaves the tabla into a tapestry of electronic beeps, hums, and buzzes.

—*John J. Donohue*

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS
1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—For the past twenty years the Bronx Museum has sponsored a program that arms emerging artists for

battle in the marketplace, offering seminars on grants and galleries, and concluding with a summer exhibition of their work. This year's show is a double-decker affair, with distinguished alumni of years past featured in the upstairs galleries (**"Good Business Is the Best Art,"** through Sept. 10) and the current crop occupying the museum's lower level (**"Artists in the Marketplace,"** through Oct. 15). Alumni standouts include Paul Henry Ramirez's canvas-cum-mural, which looks like a collaboration between Larry Pittman and Dr. Seuss by way of Benjamin Moore, and the sprawling, arachnid intricacy of Rina Banerjee's installation. Downstairs, Beth Campbell's fevered pencil drawings, projections of the possible outcomes of her present circumstances, are a riveting and hilarious take on the increasingly popular systems-centric approach to making art, which is much in evidence here. Video is in surprisingly short supply, though Kristine Marx's small-scale projection of a couple in a hotel room is a high point, at once wistful and austere. Through Sept. 17. (Open Wednesdays, 3 to 9; Thursdays and Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

MORGAN LIBRARY

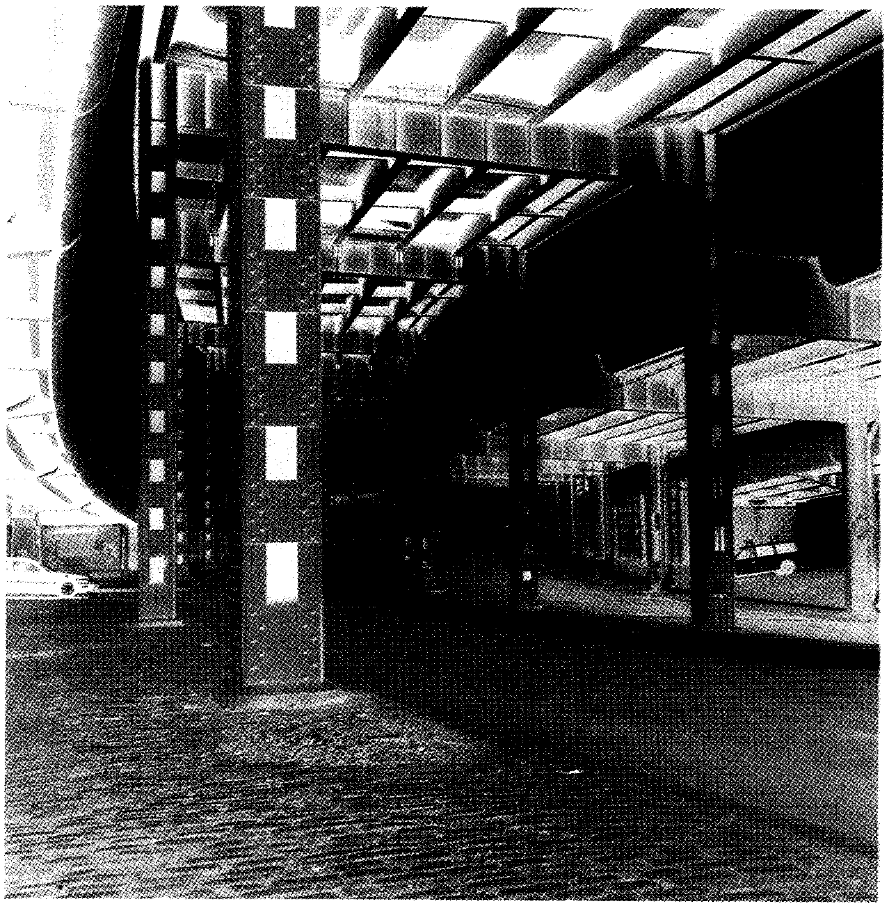
29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—**"Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur."** The cradle of Western civilization is rocking this summer as the museum showcases a dazzling cache of Mesopotamian loot unearthed by Sir Leonard Woolley in the twenties. The objects, from the middle of the third millennium B.C., include such renowned masterpieces of Sumerian art as the inaccurately named "Ram Caught in a Thicket" (Woolley cribbed the title from the Old Testament, but the creature is clearly a goat). The exquisitely modelled statuette, a scant seventeen inches tall, with gold leaf and lapis lazuli, has a pavé of shell shards the size and shape of nail clippings to substitute for fleece. Through Sept. 10. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5; Fridays, 10:30 to 8; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (831-7272)—In a front gallery, the Cuban/Puerto Rican artist Ernesto Pujol continues to discreetly cash in on the years he spent living as a Trappist monk. His current project's title, "Conversion of Manners," translates the vow of *conversatio morum,* which monks take when they first leave secular life. But any hopes of spiritual voyeurism that viewers might have are frustrated by Pujol's mild-mannered photographs of hooded figures seen standing, kneeling, or petting an affable Welsh corgi. The point, presumably, is that religious life happens on the inside. The pictures themselves, though, suggest an Episcopalian makeover rather than a Catholic *conversatio.* The rest of the museum's exhibition space has been devoted to **"The S-Files,"** the second annual survey of artwork by young Latino artists. It's a good-natured, uneven, multimedia fiesta, with equal portions of installation, photography, and painting. Among the notable works are Ivelisse Jimenez's wall constructions, partially hidden behind screens of translucent acetate, and Emilio Perez's cartoons in caramelized sugar. Through Sept. 24. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—In the tradition of the Farm Security Administration's documentary coverage of the American dust bowl in the nineteen-thirties, **"New York Now 2000"** presents photographs of the life and landscape of this city, by forty-one contemporary photographers. The works range from intimate daguerreotypes to mural-size color prints. The show is inspiring—especially Abelardo Morell's inverted camera-obscura projections of the city's commercial lights on the walls of private spaces; Maria Theresia Litschauer's cross-processed color images, which add a psychedelic twist to the traditional urban landscape; Luis Mallo's closeups of the mudra-like gestures of passengers on the train; and the landscapes of nature in hard places by Richard Rothman. Through Oct. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)



A view of Red Hook, Brooklyn, from the series "NY Trespassing," photographed by Maria Theresia Litschauer, at the Museum of the City of New York.

THE NEW MUSEUM

583 Broadway (219-1222)—While Martha Rosler's artistic step-cousins Jenny Holzer and Barbara Kruger have been polishing epigraphs, Rosler, who says she would prefer that audiences see her "as a ham-fisted person . . . trying something they could do better," has been making her own brand of smart, funny, homespun photo-collages, videos, and text pieces. Her first retrospective opens with the reprise of the 1973 work "Monumental Garage Sale," a combination bargain hunt and art event that uses the display and sale of clothing, household items, and "objects d'art" to lure viewers into video, audio, and slide meditations on family and commerce, then into a backroom sale of more risqué items, which have included pornography and used underwear. Additional works include photographs, panels of cards from several of her postcard novels, and "A Budding Gourmet," a video that looks at gender and artistic production via a mockery of TV cooking shows. Presented in conjunction with the International Center of Photography; through Oct. 8. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—**"The Stork Club."** Mementos abound in a somewhat unconvincingly staged (is it the fluorescent lighting?) re-creation of the famous club—originally a speakeasy, eventually a society watering hole, and ultimately a failed disco. Lest anyone think the Hard Rock Café invented merchandising, items on display include Stork Club ties, lapel pins, and a bomber jacket—albeit one hand-painted for an airman who flew in the Stork Club squadron. Through Oct. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5.)

ISAMU NOGUCHI GARDEN MUSEUM

32-37 Vernon Blvd., at 33rd Rd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—Works from every period in the career of the Japanese-American sculptor (1904-88) are installed in a garden and in open-air galleries carved from, and added to, an old photo-engraving factory. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Volume: Bed of Sound."** A two-part group show of sound art—though a provocative wall text by artist Max Neuhaus challenges the term—half of which works, and half of which doesn't. Two long galleries each sport a giant futon resting on a platform. The first bed is studded with fifty-eight small Walkmans, installed along its perimeter, each playing a different work, identified by label. Despite the seemingly arbitrary curatorial selection—ranging from composers Alvin Lucier and Paul de Marinis to the Japanese girl group Cibo Matto and the artist Vito Acconci—lolling and listening is a satisfying experience. But at the second bed, the sound is transmitted into the room at large, so there's no way to identify the piece you're listening to (unless you somehow find the wee button on the stereo, the pressing of which will display the artist's name). But on the whole, it's nice to be reminded, as Loudon Wainwright sings in one selection, that a bed can be "more than just one thing. It's garden, boat, and boxing ring." Through Oct. 1. ♦ The architectural collaborative SHoP has transformed the courtyard of P.S. 1 into a "dunescape for summer relaxation" replete with sand, surf (well, two wading pools), boardwalks, and even umbrellas, in case museumgoers forget their sunscreen. Cobbled together from cedar two-by-twos, the cabanalike structure looks as if it's on the brink of collapse, which underscores its casual and temporary condition. On Saturdays, the museum throws a weekly Warm Up beach party, with musical accompaniment from a series of d.j.s. Through Sept. 2. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Summer hours: unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

"THE MORRIS MUSEUM: A COLLECTED CENTURY"
This selection from the holdings of the Morris Museum, in Morristown, New Jersey, represents every aspect of the collection, which runs the gamut from paleontology to prints to pottery. The curator's desire to represent the breadth of the collection is admirable, but, as the installation in this corporate lobby shifts from vitrines filled with beaded evening bags and eyeglasses to a charming group of children's chairs, the show begins to feel like an episode of "Antiques Road Show." Through Sept. 8. (Paine Webber Gallery, 1285 Sixth Ave., at 51st St. 713-2885.)

"SCHOLASTIC ART AND WRITING AWARDS"
Long before Harry Potter cast his first spell, this juvenile-oriented publishing house was fostering talent in grade-school and high-school writers and artists with annual awards, the largest of their kind. Alumni include Sylvia Plath and Andy Warhol; current jurors include the poet Adrienne Rich and the gallery owner Gracie Mansion. This year, the recently established Corning Gallery has arranged to display ninety winning entries, which show remarkably little pretension and some solid work. Craft pieces are lower in number and impact than art on the wall, which includes good drawing, painting, and photography, with moments of excellence—even by grownup standards. One painting, a closeup of an altered Life board game, explains the push behind all this promise with the reward written on a square: "Win Scholarship, Collect $5000!" Through Sept. 24. (Corning, 667 Madison Ave., at 61st St. 646-497-3744.)

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

MELISSA RICHARD
Call it the glop aesthetic: a number of talented younger painters have been showing playful, splattery abstractions lately, as if they were hoping to enliven the discipline with a jolt of preschool high spirits. But while Jennifer Reeves and Elizabeth Cooper dish out their squirts and puddles of color cleanly, Richard prefers a lusher, messier look. Lavish trickles overlay one another across big sheets of primed paper, suggesting marbleizing effects gone awry. When she's not spilling or pouring, Richard flings, stirs, or squeezes out piles of pigment. The aim, one feels, is to evade, or at least to complicate, an atmospheric prettiness. Richards doesn't always succeed, but her best works, such as "Pine Valley Camp for Girls," have an explosive glee, like the floor under an infant's high chair. Through Sept. 9. (Moore, 140 W. 30th St. 279-8977.)

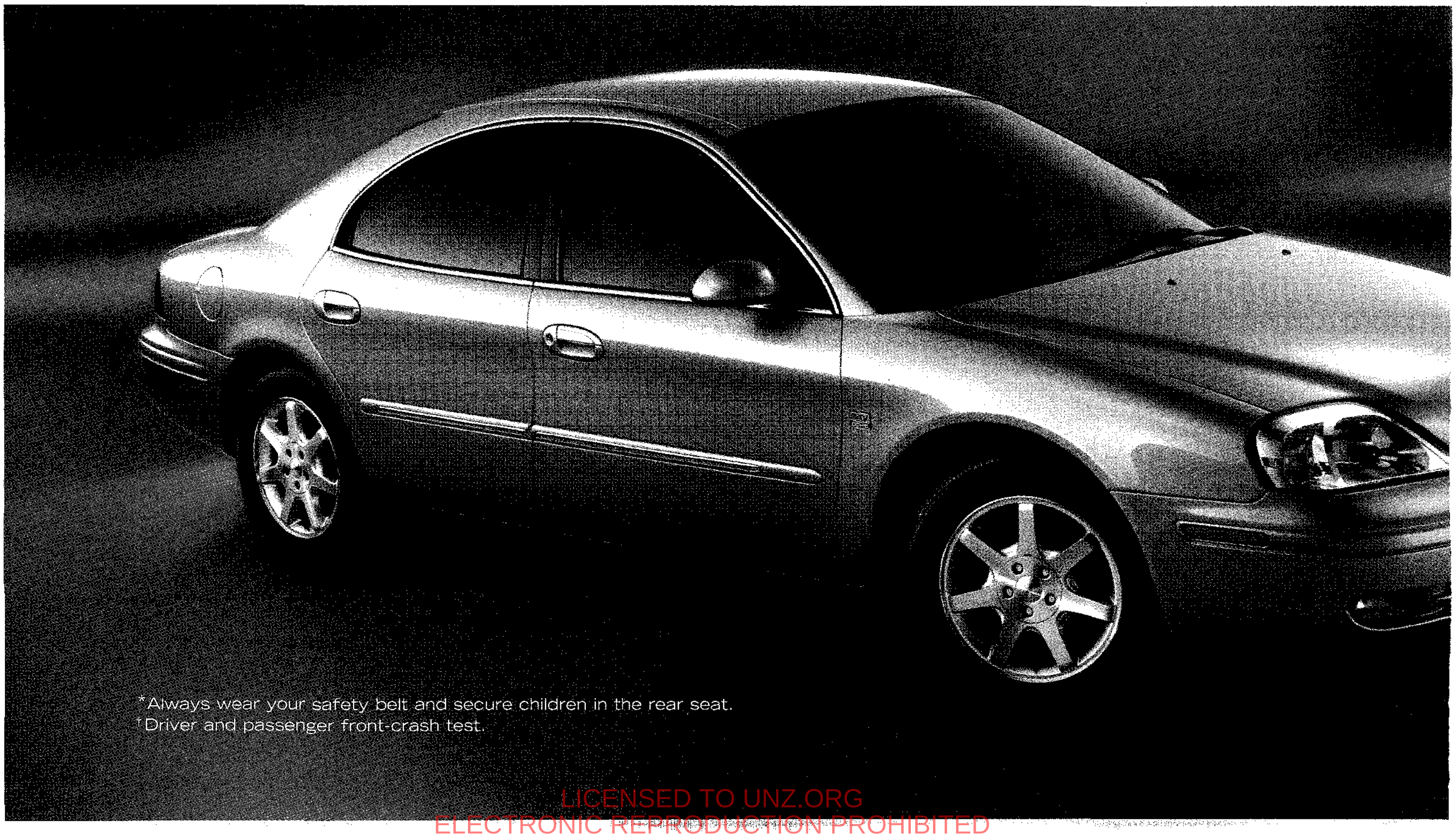
GROUP SHOW
The world's oldest genre, that of the aboriginal Australians, is also, in its recent permutations, among the youngest, having migrated to acrylic on canvas as recently as 1971. Though the "dreaming" symbolism that underlies their designs is somewhat esoteric, the paintings themselves are pleasing, and, as this exhibition of more than a dozen older artists reminds us, bizarrely familiar. Gloria Petyarre's allover patterns, based on lizard scales, forcefully call to mind Jasper Johns's "hatching" paintings of the seventies. Wallaby Moss Morgan's "Seed Dreaming" paintings could have been made by Richard Poussette-Dart on a very good day. And the celebrated Emily Kame Kngwarreye seems to have had some sort of telepathic relationship with Joan Mitchell, though, in fact, her huge canvas depicts the tangled root system of a wild yam. Through Sept. 2. (Steele, 547 W. 27th St. 736-5565.)

"OPULENT"
An unabashed devotion to beauty unites the artists in this exhibition of decorative abstraction. The front gallery is dominated by Richmond Burton's painting "Full Circle," a ground of wobbly, colored circles out of which emerges a single terra-cotta form vaguely reminiscent of an African sculpture. But best of show goes to Chris Ofilli's ecstatic "Mya," with its color-field splash of viscous blue amid a maelstrom of yellow dots. Through Sept. 1. (Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727.)

"TANGKAS"
With its grimacing deities surrounded by levitating bodhisattvas and gorgeous, flamelike emanations, Tibetan Buddhist art is about as far from the sober tranquillity of its Zen cousin as any art form on the planet. Where else can you find the "jewel-vomiting mongoose," not to mention aerial coitus, a standard motif? Often, the most ferocious images are the most hypnotically opulent. "Inner Yama" (a sort of death-wish deity), from the eighteenth century, rivals Bosch for demonic high spirits. All of the sixty tangkas (tempera paintings) and bronzes on view come from the Tibet House's Repatriation Collection, which was founded in 1992 and is intended to be returned, eventually, to a liberated homeland. Through Sept. 22. (22 W. 15th St. 807-0563.)

GALLERIES–DOWNTOWN

MARI EASTMAN
A recent move to L.A. brought Mari Eastman to her ideal artistic subject—glam. These pictures in acrylic, spray paint, embroidery, sticker, and glitter are full of elegant animals: swans, horses, pumas, and other beasts. In her more literal moods, the artist offers various enormous diamond rings, a drawing of a "Young Lady with Drink," and an



*Always wear your safety belt and secure children in the rear seat.
†Driver and passenger front-crash test.

acrylic painting of "Mari's Fabulous Opening." The miragelike shine of the city and the palm trees suggests Eastman's skepticism, and the lone sculpture of a movie star, "Chewbacca Reclining," brings home her sense of humor. Through Aug. 31. (Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083.)

SUSAN LEOPOLD
Set into a subway platform wall, "Waterway" offers a view into a seductively gloomy architectural space, inspired by the canal system of early Manhattan. Leopold opened a pair of existing windows to offer a view through to an unused storage area that she transformed; passersby can now peer into mirrored galleries that meander in several directions through miniature archways while light shines up from the rippling aqua-blue floor she installed there. The effect recalls Piranesi and de Chirico, filtered through memories of seventies night clubs. Through April of 2001. (At the downtown platform of the Franklin Street stop on the 1 and 9 trains.)

"THE BEATNIK ART SHOW"
In order to seek membership in California's "world famous Beatnik Car Club," aspirants must be heavily tattooed, wear a goatee, and be obsessed by fifties-era automobiles. On the occasion of the First Annual New York Hot Rod and Tattoo Convention, downtown music venue CBGB hosts a show of drawings, paintings, and photographs by qualified beatniks; the artists themselves man the show from one to six each afternoon. The work is largely tattoo- or airbrush-inspired, and the works are at their best when, like the cars, they're completely over the top. Through Sept. 8. (313 Bowery. 677-0455.)

"STRUCTURE AND EXPRESSION"
Rei Kawakubo, the designer behind the Comme des Garçons label, has reconfigured the entry to the Ace Gallery so that it resembles—even more than usual—a mall. Partitions covered with fashion photos and placed at fun-house angles guide viewers down a high-ceilinged open hall to a flat video monitor; laid on the floor, it shows loops of Merce Cunningham's company performing in Kawakubo's asymetrically padded costumes. David Amico's canvases fill one of several other rooms off this main hall, and while they are painted with his usual variety of rough daubs and smears, they are more thematically focussed, with symbols taken from the streets of Los Angeles: graffiti, machinery, expanses of concrete. Additional work by Charles Fine and John Millei. Through Oct. 28. (275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

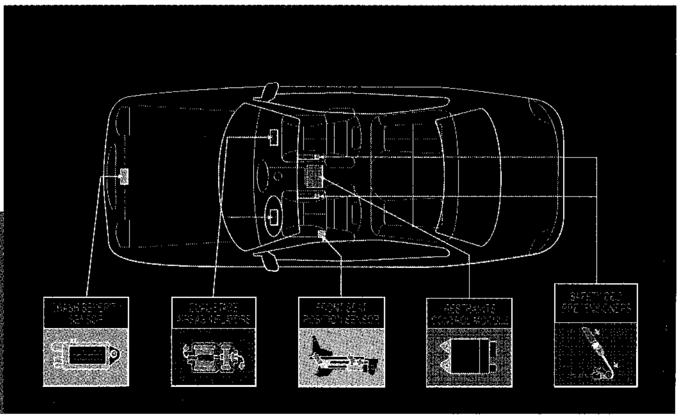
PHOTOGRAPHY

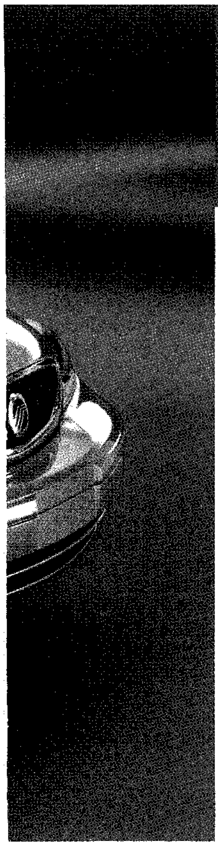
LIZ RIDEAL
English artist Rideal shows color images of fabric taken in a photo booth—romantic, minimalist pictures that mix the formality and ephemerality of Agnes Martin's work with the curvy, textile-draped femininity of Veronese's. In "Arras Suite Red," hundreds of four-picture photo strips create a Muybridge-like meditation on the movements of a piece of Indian silk. For "Pig's Ear," pink fabric somersaults across a black background, inanimate but somehow loaded with playful and lyrical humanity. Through Sept. 8. (Schoormans, 508 W. 26th St. 243-3159.)

WILHELM VON GLOEDEN
Von Gloeden (1856-1931) was born into the Prussian nobility but moved to Taormina, Sicily, before launching his artistic career. In this warmer climate and more relaxed society, the Baron's disabling respiratory problems eased and his nervous condition (which the gallery calls "psychological distress experienced as a pederast unable to indulge his erotic fantasies") improved. The pictures on show here, taken between 1878 and 1914, are largely of nude and partially clothed young men, one in Pan's horns and not much else, others half-draped in Grecian-style togas. Most figures are identified simply as "Sicilian Youth," including the lone young woman posed as the Virgin, perhaps a companion to a better-known image not on show here: the Baron's own self-portrait as Christ. Through Sept. 9. (Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059.)

"CAPTURE THE MOMENT"
Press photographers have been following this show's title directive for years, sometimes successfully. This selection of Pulitzer Prize-winning pictures leapfrogs bewilderingly back and forth through history—before the Vietnam War, domestic disaster figured largely, as in John Gaunt, Jr.,'s 1954 picture of a couple whose eighteen-month-old son has just drowned off the California coast. After Vietnam, images are drawn from an ever-widening spiral of war and famine, through Rhodesia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Iran, and onward. The work's impact is marred somewhat by brief, often inane oral histories of the photographs, which hang with overenthusiastic descriptive captions. Perhaps the dopiest accompanies a series on the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan: "Both men intend to shoot the president. One holds a camera, the other, a gun." Through Sept. 23. (Newseum, 580 Madison Ave. 317-7503.)

"OTRAS COSAS"
This group show introduces viewers to a circle of early-twentieth-century Mexican abstract photographers. Rosa Covarrubias's photograms are playful but unremarkable, while Emilio Amero's have a modernist aesthetic—his 1932 "Untitled (Abstract)" shows a mix of organic forms being overtaken by urban geometry. Elsewhere, Agustín Jiménez looks at patterns in cactus spines, and Lola Alvarez Bravo captures impressionistic landscapes; both are overshadowed by the latter's one-time husband, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, the best-known artist in the show. His 1926 "Juegos de Papel (Paper Games)" gives a tabletop still-life such mass and movement that it becomes a piece of architecture, and seems in hindsight to have


CRASH SEVERITY SENSOR
DUAL-STAGE AIRBAG INFLATORS
FRONT SEAT POSITION SENSOR
RESTRAINTS CONTROL MODULE
SAFETY BELT PRETENSIONERS



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informed Frank Gehry. Through Oct. 10. (Mexican Cultural Institute, 27 E. 39th St. 217-6422.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—**"A Durable Memento"** presents daguerreotypes of places (Connecticut, Liberia) and people (John Brown) taken by Augustus Washington, the son of a former slave. Through Sept. 24. **"Positions in the Life World"** surveys Martha Rossler's photos and videos, including such classics as her 1975 "Semiotics of the Kitchen." Through Oct. 1. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

"SPIAGGE"
De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.
Through Sept. 9.

See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, both branches of the Whitney Museum, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Museum of the City of New York, the New Museum, and the New-York Historical Society.

Revelling on Labor Day at the West Indian Day Parade, along Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway (see Above and Beyond).

CLASSICAL MUSIC IN TOWN

MANHATTAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
Trinity Church's summer salute to Mozart continues, as Richard Auldon Clark conducts the orchestra in the Overture to "Il Re Pastore" and the Serenade in D Major (K. 250, the "Haffner"). (Broadway at Wall St. Aug. 31 at 1. No tickets necessary.)

BARGEMUSIC
Aug. 31-Sept. 1 at 7:30: Oboist Keisuke Ikama is featured in Mozart's Oboe Quartet and Charles Martin Loeffler's Two Rhapsodies. Brahms's B-Major Piano Trio completes the program. ♦ Sept. 2 at 7:30 and Sept. 3 at 4: Clarinettist Thomas Hill heads the roster for a program that comprises Schumann's "Märchenerzählungen," Brahms's Clarinet Trio, and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

MUSICAL OBSERVATIONS
This organization inaugurates what it hopes will become an annual affair, a two-week workshop in which musicians undergo a total immersion in the music of a single twentieth-century composer. This year's subject is Milton Babbitt, who will participate in the convocation as a lecturer and coach. Now in his eighty-fifth year, Babbitt has been an imposing presence for decades, arguing through his writings and his compositions for a pure, often mathematical approach to music. The demands on listeners are stringent, but those who persevere have often found much in it to admire and eventually even enjoy. The workshop's proceedings culminate in a public concert in which students offer Babbitt's String Quartet No. 6 and "Composition for Four Instruments," among other pieces. (Harry De Jur Playhouse, Henry Street Settlement, 466 Grand St. Aug. 31 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

ANTON MILLER
The weekly series on City Island, New York City's way-uptown nautical community, presents this violinist in a concert of two symphonic warhorses (with pianist Ilan Rechtman taking the place of the orchestra): Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto and Sarasate's "Carmen Fantasy." (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Sept. 3 at noon.)

JOANNA LEIGH ELLIOTT
The organist, from Waco, Texas, plays works by Charles Tournemire, Maurice Duruflé, and others, in one of St. Patrick's Cathedral's almost weekly organ recitals, which spotlight performers from all around the United States, and occasionally even beyond. (Fifth Ave. at 51st St. Sept. 3 at 4:45. No tickets necessary.)

KONSTANTIN SOUKHOVETSKI
The pianist performs works by Haydn, Schumann (his "Symphonic Études"), and Scriabin, in one of the weekly lunchtime recitals spotlighting Juilliard students at the Continental Center. (180 Maiden Lane, at Front St. Sept. 5 at 12:30. No tickets necessary.)

JOHN CAGE TRIBUTE
The composer, author, and aesthete John Cage has been dead for eight years, but the groupies who linger on have made sure that his idiosyncratic message of musical liberation continues to be heard. The celebration of his birthday has become an annual downtown event, and this year's installment promises to be as captivatingly bizarre as any. The two-hour proceedings will be given over principally to a video realization of his "49 Waltzes for the Five Boroughs," a 1977 composition in which Cage used his beloved chance operations to pinpoint a hundred and forty-seven sites in New York City, which he then categorized in groups of three. The triangles formed by connecting the dots of each group were drawn onto a map of the city, forming a kind of score. The work was eventually "played" as a video installation documenting each location. While the piece is being presented, various readers will also deliver excerpts from Cage's literary works. (Parish Hall, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Sept. 5 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

OUT OF TOWN

ON THE JERSEY SHORE
The seaside resort of Ocean Grove was created in 1869 as a destination for Methodists seeking spiritual and cultural enrichment away from such wanton influences as card playing and alcoholic beverages. The village's Victorian wholesomeness and architecture—and its Methodist disposition—have remained unruffled ever since. A great organ, of course, is de rigueur in such a setting, and in 1908 a huge instrument by the visionary builder Robert Hope-Jones was unveiled in the resort's sixty-five-hundred-seat Great Auditorium (an additional fifteen hundred souls somehow squeezed in for the unveiling). Renovations have expanded it into one of the nation's largest organs, with more than ten thousand pipes and a weight of twenty-five tons. This week, Gordon Turk concludes his twenty-seventh season as the auditorium's resident organist; though his wide-ranging programs tend to coalesce only days before the performance, listeners can be assured that whatever he plays will show off this historic instrument to the hilt. (Great Auditorium, Ocean Grove, N.J. Aug. 30 at 7:30. No tickets necessary. For information, call 732-775-0035.)

BERKSHIRE OPERA COMPANY
The company's season concludes with "Don Giovanni," with a cast that includes sopranos Barbara Shirvis (as Donna Elvira), Rachel Rosales (as Donna Anna), and Arianna Zukerman (as Zerlina), tenor Benjamin Brecher (as Don Ottavio), baritone Stephen Powell (in the title role), and bass-baritone Philip Cokorinos (as Leporello). Joel Revzen conducts. (Koussevitzky Arts Center, Berkshire Community College, Pittsfield, Mass. 413-443-7400. Aug. 31 and Sept. 2 at 8.)

BEETHOVEN FESTIVAL
At Long Island's Planting Fields Arboretum, Coe Hall mansion and Hay Barn will resound with

DEBORAH ROSS

TABLES FOR TWO

MEIGAS
350 Hudson St. (627-5800)—In a badly painted room on a lonely stretch west of SoHo, chef Luis Bollo—known for his work at the innovative El Bulli, in San Sebastian—has been producing excellent nouvelle Basque and Galician cuisine for almost a year. Now that he's had time to tone down his more extremist ideas (eggplant foam and stuffed veal's feet have been eighty-sixed), his versions of Iberian classics feel brand new rather than plain weird. Bollo has, for example, a perfect touch with Montsia rice, a plump grain that manages to be both creamy and crisp; he uses it to anchor the dishes, and it's nothing like the standard-issue yellow rice in paella.

The most essential appetizer is the tender baby squid in its own ink; the black puddle is so thick that it becomes the main ingredient. "The rice—mix it in little by little," commands the waiter, whose pharaonic two-foot beard, solemn mumble, and tendency to march back and forth from the kitchen compel diners to heed his recommendations. Octopus is served practically mashed, so its tentacley texture is tamed, and the smoky flavor stands out. And silken slices of cod with truffle oil melt like a briny dressing into each bite of the white-bean-and-asparagus salad.

Suckling pig is the star entrée, a vast slab of crunchy skin and tender meat roasted in honey and sherry vinegar. Baby cuttlefish are stewed in white wine and squid ink and served in a robust tart, and the cod confit has so much concentrated flavor that its bed of mushroom-and-foie-gras-spiked rice seems superfluous. When it comes to dessert, the cheese—in this case, a stunning tart of *queso fresco* with quince, walnuts, and mint—stands alone. The comprehensive and nicely explicated sherry list is backed by a strong selection of Albariños and Riojas.

Meigas fails only in the romance department; the paint job spoils what could have been a grand space. When the check arrives, it's not the food but the faux marbling, trompe-l'oeil bric-a-brac, and bizarre mural of a dopey-looking witch haunting a seafaring banquet table which make the prices here seem steep. It helps a little to know that *meigas* means good witches, but the owners would almost have been better off with the typical assortment of sangria-shack bullfighting posters. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner; Saturdays for dinner only. Entrées $19-$29.)

—*Owen Phillips*

Beethoven songs, piano pieces, and chamber music, performed by (among others) the pianists Claude Frank and Stella Simakova, the cellist Yosif Feigelson, and the Laurentian String Quartet. You can't hear everything, since performances take place simultaneously in the two venues between noon and four; following that is a finale at Hay Barn, which concludes with Mr. Frank's performance of Beethoven's last piano sonata (in C Minor, Op. 111). (Oyster Bay, Long Island, N.Y. Sept. 2 from noon to 6. For information about tickets, call 516-922-0061. ♦ **Note:** Families with preteens may want to come early for a free performance, at 11:15 A.M., by Paul Peabody's Old Fashioned Marionette Theatre, whose puppets dance to Beethoven selections.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
The pianist Ruth Laredo and the Shanghai String Quartet settle in for the weekend. Sept. 2 at 8: The foursome performs quartets by Haydn (in D Major, Op. 20, No. 4) and Beethoven (in C Minor, Op. 18, No. 4), and Ms. Laredo assists in Brahms's G-Minor Piano Quartet. ♦ Sept. 3 at 3: Charles Tomlinson Griffes's "Two Sketches Based on Indian Themes," as well as Dvořák's "American" Quartet in F Major (Op. 96) and Brahms's Piano Quintet. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126.) ♦ **Note:** Music Mountain regulars know to come early to sample the festival's pre-concert events, which often tend toward the offbeat. On Sept. 3 at 2, the pre-concert slot is given over to the Canine Quadrille, a congenial group of dogs (with human partners) who wowed, or at least bow-wowed, festival audiences last season. This year, the menagerie—poodle, Border collie, golden retriever, Shetland sheepdog, and Welsh corgi—will trace the steps of the quadrille to the accompaniment of Bach's B-Minor Flute Sonata.

MAVERICK CONCERTS
Final concerts of the season. On Sept. 2 at 8, the Hanoverian Ensemble offers four celebrated works by Bach: his Orchestral Suite No. 2 (spotlighting flutist John Solum), "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 4, E-Major Violin Concerto, and Concerto for Flute, Violin, and Harpsichord. ♦ Sept. 3 at 3: It's hard to say just why the cello octet became established as a popular chamber configuration. There's certainly no other grouping of eight similar instruments which enjoys the same quantity—or quality—of repertoire. It surely has something to do with the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos, himself a cellist, who composed his "Bachianas Brasileiras" No. 1, for cello octet, in 1930, and later returned to the same ensemble (though with an added soprano singer) for his pop hit "Bachianas Brasileiras" No. 5. For the final concert of Maverick's eighty-fifth season, eight cellists convene to play the latter piece (with soprano Serena Benedetti adding her voice), in addition to original works and arrangements by Alan Shulman and Bach. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

CARNIVAL!
The final days of summer in Brooklyn take on a tropical feel thanks to preparations for the annual West Indian Day Parade. The sounds of steel bands and calypso music fill the evening air as thousands of people begin to gather for the event, which is inspired by the pre-Lenten carnivals of the Caribbean. Now in its thirty-third year, this parade draws more than three million spectators, who come to Brooklyn from around the globe to eat curried goat and jerk chicken and watch thousands of sequinned and feathered revellers dance to soca, calypso, and steel bands. The parade is actually the capstone of a five-day celebration that includes a masquerade costume competition on Aug. 31, a battle of Caribbean brass bands on Sept. 1, and a steel-band competition on Sept. 2. All shows are at 8 outside the Brooklyn Museum of Art, on Eastern Parkway. The parade itself begins Sept. 4 at 10:30 A.M., at Utica Avenue, and runs up Eastern Parkway past the Brooklyn Museum. For more information, call 718-625-1515. ♦ **Note:** The truly adventurous will want to get there early: a grassroots festival of homemade, often comical, costumes and local bands called J'ouvert (French Creole for "daybreak") starts at 2 A.M., at Empire Boulevard and Flatbush Avenue.

READINGS
Sept. 1 at 7: By poets Cecilia Vicuña, Letta S. Neely, and Tisa Bryant. (Bluestockings, 172 Allen St., between Rivington and Stanton Sts. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 1 at 7: By Howard Buten, from his novel "When I was Five I Killed Myself." (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 5 at 8: By poets Cristin O'Keefe Aptowicz and Douglas A. Martin. (Dixon Place, 309 E. 26th St. For more information, call 532-1546)

WALK
Sept. 4 at 1: Big Onion Walking Tours offers a union-flavored stroll through lower Manhattan, past the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory and the site of the first Labor Day Parade, in 1882. For more information, call 439-1090.

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ON THE town

OSCAR'S RESTAURANT
September 21st, New York City

Oscar's restaurant, within The Waldorf=Astoria Hotel, will feature another of its popular beer dinners, Thursday, September 21st at 6:30 PM. Extraordinary value at only $55 per person, inclusive of tax and gratuity. Featuring New England's best microbrews, the event begins with an hor d'oeuvres reception, followed by a 5-beer, 4-course dinner. Call 1-212-872-4920 for reservations.

LIFETIME TELEVISION INVITES YOU TO "STOP BREAST CANCER FOR LIFE"

Lifetime is dedicated to eradicating breast cancer as it expands its awareness and advocacy against this disease that kills one woman in the United States every 12 minutes. Lifetime's "Stop Breast Cancer for Life" project includes sponsoring the National Breast Cancer Coalition's "Make Breast Cancer History" signature drive, a campaign to collect one million pledges from individuals asking that their political leaders take stronger action to eradicate breast cancer.

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Add your name to the signature drive by September 10th, and you will be automatically entered to win a trip for two to New York City for the world premiere of "The Contenders," a Dreamwork's release starring Jeff Bridges, Joan Allen and Gary Oldman.

To enter, visit www.lifetimetv.com, fill out the "Stop Breast Cancer for Life" form and type "New Yorker" into the comment box. Winner must be available to travel the week of October 9th, 2000.

Watch Lifetime's and *Marie Claire*'s Women Rock! concert supporting the fight against breast cancer on October 22nd to see the stars join the signature drive.

Do your part and help Lifetime "Stop Breast Cancer for Life."

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Entries must be received by 11:59PM, PT, September 10, 2000. Must be legal US resident 18 years of age to enter. For a complete set of rules and regulations, visit www.newyorkerreaderlink.com. Void where prohibited.

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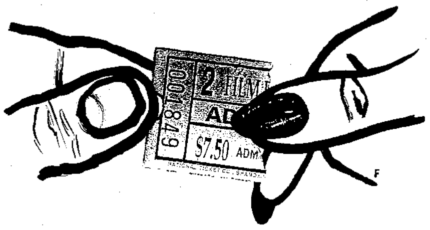

MOVIES OPENING

DARK DAYS
A documentary about the eviction of a homeless community that lived in a tunnel beneath midtown Manhattan. Directed by Marc Singer. Opening Aug. 30. (Film Forum.)

HIGHLANDER: ENDGAME
Powerful warriors do battle to determine who will be the last of their kind, in this adaptation of the fantasy television series. Directed by Douglas Aarniokoski. Opening Sept. 1.

MADADAYO
Akira Kurosawa's thirtieth and final film, an homage to a beloved professor. In Japanese. Opening Sept. 1. (Cinema Village.)

TITANIC TOWN
A drama about the Troubles in Northern Ireland, directed by Roger Michell, with Julie Walters as a housewife and peace activist. Opening Sept. 1.

WHIPPED
Four guys discover that they are all in love with the same girl (Amanda Peet), in this comedy written and directed by Peter M. Cohen. Opening Sept. 1.

FILM NOTES

BENJAMIN SMOKE
This documentary, a requiem for the singer-songwriter Benjamin (a.k.a. Robert Dickerson) of the band Smoke, has the funereal gloom of a great Lou Reed record. The filmmakers, Jem Cohen and Peter Sillen, weave Benjamin's story—his impoverished life in Cabbagetown (a former mill town that's now part of Atlanta), his Southern drag-queen demeanor, his pill-popping, his struggle with AIDS—into a ragged tapestry of a talented life in extreme situations. Benjamin's face is a junkie rock star's dream (it has shades of Mick Jagger, David Johansen, and Steven Tyler), and his vocal delivery echoes Tom Waits and John Cale. What the directors get exactly right are the details of Benjamin's world: the damaged photographs, the graying shingled houses, and the cut and bruised townspeople. It's no surprise when Patti Smith shows up at the end of the film with a poem she's written for him.—*Bruce Diones* (The Screening Room.)

BRING IT ON
A hyperkinetic teen movie that flirts with some interesting ideas about race, hip-hop, and the overblown world of competitive cheering but decides to smile and high-kick instead. The pert-mouthed Kirsten Dunst, captain of a successful suburban California squad, is crushed when she discovers that her team's sultry dance routines were stolen from an all-black squad from East Compton—a form of whitewashing that has a long tradition, from Pat Boone to Vanilla Ice. Without a satisfying showdown, the film merely bounces along with a series of peppy but pointless scenes of young actresses dancing in halter tops.—*Michael Agger* (Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, and Union Square.)

CECIL B. DEMENTED
The new John Waters picture takes its place in the long and semi-honorable tradition of Hollywood self-scorn. The title character is an underground movie director (Stephen Dorff) dedicated to the demolition of standard studio pap. Surrounded by his gang of guerrilla technicians, he kidnaps a lustrous star (Melanie Griffith) and forces her to play the lead in his latest slice of zero-budget decadence. As Cecil and his crew attack multiplexes and movie sets, it's never quite clear where they or Waters are pointing their radical rage: at the process of filmmaking, at the national theatre chains, or at those citizens of a free America who exercise their right to watch baloney. The movie promises to be funny, should be funny, and spends most of the time teetering on the brink of being funny, but it just isn't funny. The trouble is that real events have overtaken the conceit; there are plenty of young indie directors out there who, fired by the success of "The Blair Witch Project" and the Dogma group, have every hope of getting their spicy, home-baked pictures onto the big screen.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/14 & 8/21/00.) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

THE CELL
A man's intestines twirled around a golden spit; the pulsating organs of a dissected horse encased in glass; dead women pieced together as mechanical dolls—these are just some of the ghoulish tableaus encountered by Jennifer Lopez, who plays a child psychologist who travels, via experimental drug, into the mind of a serial killer. The plot doesn't make much sense, but the imagery is arresting. The director, Tarsem Singh, made his name in music videos, and his feature début is full of intense visual trickery; he relies on surreal contrasts (snowflakes falling on a sunlit desert) and clever cuts (from pouring milk to a body drenched in bleach). Since most of the film takes place inside a psychopath's mind, the normal, comforting conventions of suspense don't apply.—*M.A.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, 42nd Street East Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

THE DECALOGUE
In 1988 and 1989, the Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski made a series of ten films for Polish television, in which each movie, roughly an hour in length, was devoted to one of the Ten Commandments. The films, set largely around an apartment complex in Warsaw, are not so much literal illustrations of the commandments as fables inspired by them—very modern fables, it turns out, featuring relations between men and women, and parents and children, of a depth and intensity not seen since Ingmar Bergman stopped making movies in the early eighties.—*David Denby* (6/12/00) (The Screening Room.)

GIRL ON THE BRIDGE
A waifish young woman (Vanessa Paradis) attempts to drown herself but is saved by a knife thrower (Daniel Auteuil) who persuades her to join his act, where she becomes both nerveless victim and indispensable muse. He whirls her from one fancy location to the next, living on the slim proceeds of their success and gazing with avuncular disdain upon her incessant amours. The movie promises to be as steely as the flying blades, and the knife-tossing sequences make you flinch; but the director, Patrice Leconte, seems unable to match the coolness of his heroine, and the story droops into whimsy. Still, here is your chance to study the phenomenon that is Ms. Paradis—a huge draw in France and the beloved of Johnny Depp, who sports a similar set of cheekbones. In French.—*A.L.* (Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, and First & 62nd Cinemas.)

HOLLOW MAN
A cocky scientist named Sebastian Caine (Kevin Bacon) injects serum into his veins and becomes invisible. Does Sebastian do something cool with his new freedom, like turn losers into winners at Donald Trump's casino tables or perform mysterious good deeds and then disappear? No such luck. The director Paul Verhoeven is more literal-minded and crass: Sebastian fondles and rapes women and becomes increasingly violent, eventually stalking his colleagues (including Elisabeth Shue and Josh Brolin) in a vast underground lab. The movie has some extraordinary digital effects (when Sebastian is underwater he can just barely be seen—he looks like a well-toned jellyfish, shapely and translucent), but the plotting and dialogue function at the level of a third-rate thriller. An exhaustingly bad movie devoted to an idea that could have been great fun.—*D.D.* (8/14 & 8/21/00) (84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

LOVE & SEX
The writer-director Valerie Breiman, in her first feature, has put together an inconsequential but charming romantic comedy starring the long-stemmed, unpretentious beauty Famke Janssen as a Los Angeles magazine writer and Jon Favreau ("Swingers") as her boyfriend, a wise-cracking, rather infantile painter. The movie offers little more than the latest forms of sexual banter, but the teasing mock crises are easy enough to take, and the two stars have a nice rhythm together. Janssen, with better material, could blossom into the next Julia Roberts; she's pretty irresistible even in this low-key stuff.—*D.D.* (Empire 25, 62nd & Broadway, and Union Square.)

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA
The Marx Brothers sometimes said that this was their best film; it isn't, but it was their greatest hit. Two beautifully stuffed American targets—grand opera and high society—are left dismantled, flapping like scarecrows. (If you ever could listen to "Il Trovatore" with a straight face, you can never do so again.) Many writers have tried to analyze Marx Brothers wit, coming up with little monographs on "dissociated thinking," "disguised social protest," or "commedia dell'arte." Think about it too much and sanity, like a lettuce leaf, begins to wilt and curl at the edges. The Marx Brothers keep turning corners you didn't know were there, and while you're trying to break down the content of lines like Groucho's "You big bully, why are you hitting that little bully?" you miss the series of non sequiturs that are piling up on top of it. This 1935 comedy has its classic sequence: the stateroom scene, which is widely regarded as the funniest five minutes in screen history.—*Pauline Kael* (Sept. 4; BAM Rose Cinemas.)

NUTTY PROFESSOR II: THE KLUMPS
It's hard to imagine a comedy any broader than "The Nutty Professor," but somehow Eddie Murphy manages to expand the waistline a few more inches with this crass and corpulent sequel. He plays six roles, including the affable Sherman Klump and various other members of the Klump clan. The only character to be demoted is Sherman's alter ego, Buddy Love, who was such a diabolical presence in the first movie. This time around, Murphy is no longer lampooning his own smooth reputation but simply staging a one-man parade of appetite and effluence. Janet Jackson is the costar, Peter Segal the director, and gene-splicing the topical plot hook, but none of them impinge on the unstoppable Murphy routine. For most moviegoers, all this will look like a giant backward step, but no doubt the joke is on us.—*A.L.* (8/7/00) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Waverly.)

LOS OLVIDADOS
Set in Mexico, Luis Buñuel's ruthless, almost surgical examination of how the poor prey on one another is the most horrifying of all films about juvenile crime. The one masterwork on this subject, it stands apart from the genre by its pitilessness, its controlled passion. Buñuel doesn't treat his characters as ideas but as morally responsible human beings; there is little of the familiar American-movie cant that makes everyone responsible for juvenile crimes except the juveniles. There's no pathos in this film; it's a squalid tragedy that causes the viewer to feel a moral terror. Buñuel, whose early work fascinated Freud, creates scenes that shock one psychologically. Among them here is the mother-meat dream—perhaps the greatest of all movie dream sequences; it is disturbing long after the lacerations of the more realistic material have healed. In Spanish.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Aug. 31.)

THE ORIGINAL KINGS OF COMEDY
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PULL MY DAISY
This short film from 1959 is a neat Beat picker-upper set in the slaphappy bohemian pad of a railroad conductor whose pals include Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky, and Gregory Corso—all of whom carry on, naturally enough, like poets in their youth. Jack Kerouac based the script on the third act of his play "The Beat Generation," which in turn was based on the real-life visit of a progressive clergyman to his pal Neal Cassady's house. But there's no story to speak of, and, in fact, there's no dialogue: the hilarity emerges from the way Kerouac's non-stop voice-over narration gives breezy comic ripples to seemingly spontaneous shenanigans. "Their secret, naked doodlings do show secret, scatological thought," he says in a verbal deadpan; "That's why everybody wants to see it." Under the co-direction of Alfred Leslie and the photographer Robert Frank—who wields his camera with a tipsy intimacy—the mostly amateur cast conjures an infectious, arrested-adolescent joie de vivre. The artist Larry Rivers plays the conductor, and Delphine Seyrig is his long-suffering wife; the painter Alice Neel plays the clergyman's mother.—*Michael Sragow* (American Museum of the Moving Image; Sept. 3.)

THE REPLACEMENTS
N.F.L. commentator John Madden has the best lines in this sports comedy, directed by Howard Deutch, which isn't so much a movie as a series of sports bloopers set to music, plus lots of dreamy closeups. As the man picked to mold a group of scab players during a strike, Gene Hackman reaches into his acting closet and pulls out his coach's suit, but even he can't suppress a smirk at the weightless dialogue he's obliged to deliver. Keanu Reeves plays quarterback, and he and his motley crew of teammates are funny in all the generic ways. It's a lot like one of those football games at the end of the season—enjoyable but meaningless.—*M.A.* (East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, 19th Street East Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

SPACE COWBOYS
Clint Eastwood builds a full-scale space-adventure movie around a gimmick. Four aging mavericks (Eastwood, James Garner, Donald Sutherland, and Tommy Lee Jones), Air Force hot shots from the fifties who never made it to outer space, get called into service by NASA on a special mission. It might have been a more graceful movie if Eastwood and the screenwriters, Ken Kaufman and Howard Klausner, had not joked about the men's age in every scene (James Garner is the only one who actually looks his age). Some of the hostility the men encounter (from young astronauts, for instance) is entirely unconvincing, and Eastwood's direction is a little creaky. But there are plenty of affecting and engagingly sentimental moments, many courtesy of Jones. As a widower still in love with his wife, he creeps up on the audience's emotions in his peculiarly offhand way and steals the show.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

STEAL THIS MOVIE!
The life and ravings of the radical provocateur Abbie Hoffman, who probably needs an introduction as far as younger moviegoers are concerned. Played with a kind of driven charm by Vincent D'Onofrio, Hoffman progresses from clean-cut youth to loping yeti, and from a merrily stoned jester to a bundle of prickly nerves. The film is good on his inbuilt urge to protest: even on the run from the Feds, hiding quietly under an assumed name, the guy can't help joining an environmental pressure group and saving his local river. But the story loses its grip. The director, Robert Greenwald, seems awed rather than inspired by the impishness of his hero, and there are moments when Bruce Graham's script seems like a Cliff's Notes version of the sixties. We get plenty on Abbie's rough, loving marriage to Anita (Janeane Garofalo), but the sexual sprees of their generation are tidied away in a corner of the film. You wonder whether the man himself would have welcomed an homage so dangerously low on fun.—*A.L.* (Empire 25 and 64th and 2nd.)

THE TAO OF STEVE
Jenniphr Goodman's comedy was a hit at the Sundance Film Festival, which seems to be softening its hard indie edge in favor of gentle crowd-pleasers. The film is set in Santa Fe, which comes across as the capital city of slackerdom; apparently entire lives can be structured around the art of the Frisbee. Donal Logue plays Dex, the portly and lovable hero, as a kind of threatless John Belushi—no one is wary of him or his bulk, and women, in particular, are drawn to his bed in spite of themselves. Dex has a book-fed philosophy of successful seduction, although the movie never really shows us his technique in action. Instead, we get melting hearts as he discovers that the cool-spirited Syd (Greer Goodman) may just be the woman for him. The story strolls along with ease, picking its way carefully between the nerdish and the hip, and the soundtrack is a memorable breeze, yet you come out feeling strangely underwhelmed. When did the movies last produce a proper Casanova, with the courage of his addiction?—*A.L.* (8/7/00) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

WHAT LIES BENEATH
A bag of reliable old tricks. In a beautiful lakeside house in Vermont, Michelle Pfeiffer quivers in terror as an insistent ghost plays tricks on her—opening doors, knocking over pictures, squirting toothpaste into her coffee. Robert Zemeckis, the director, even resorts to horror-movie standbys such as having a menacing person suddenly appear in the frame as Pfeiffer scans her surroundings with a pair of binoculars. The cinematography, by Don Burgess, is chastely beautiful, but the music, by Alan Silvestri, tears into your emotions with the violence of a rusty blade wielded by a maniac. Most of screenwriter Clark Gregg's dialogue is banal, and Harrison Ford, as Pfeiffer's husband, scowls in selfish indifference to her problems. The picture is effectively scary, at times unpleasantly so, but only in the last forty minutes—especially during a sequence in a bathtub—does it rise above cliché.—*D.D.* (Astor Plaza, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE WIND WILL CARRY US
A beautiful but limited exercise in aesthetic formalism from the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami. An engineer from Teheran (Behzad Dourani) arrives in a small mountain village in order to record some sort of ritual that depends on the death of an old lady. But the old woman, whom we never see, refuses to die, and the engineer waits and waits and begins to question his life. He becomes friends with a little boy, and converses with a variety of people in town, some of whom are also out of sight. He drives again and again to a hilltop to get a clear signal for his cell phone so he can call Teheran and make small talk. The picture has a mournful, slow rhythm, rather like that of prayer or a stately ballad, and clearly Kiarostami is saying something about the value of putting down roots versus modern restlessness. But when life is simplified this way and then arranged into a pattern, it yields meaning without much struggle. However handsome the movie, one may feel the game has been rigged. In Farsi.—*D.D.* (8/14/00) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

X-MEN
The most beautiful, strange, and exciting comic-book movie since the original "Batman." The world, it seems, is filled with mutants—quirks of evolution and lost souls who band together for comfort and understanding. Feared by the regular humans, the mutants, according to Magneto (Sir Ian McKellen), will never be accepted, and since they are superior he believes they should either destroy the rest of humanity or supplant it. He's been engaged in a long quarrel about this with Professor Xavier (Patrick Stewart), a soft-spoken, wheelchair-bound sage with empathic powers. The film combines the fear of aliens invading us (an old sci-fi trope) with a spectacular war of the gods. The director, Bryan Singer, builds the characters and then lets the action flow from their special physical skills.—*D.D.* (7/24/00) (Chelsea West, Empire 25, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE ART OF WAR
Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.

AUTUMN IN NEW YORK
Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Union Square.

GIMME SHELTER
Film Forum.

GODZILLA 2000
East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.

THE OPPORTUNISTS
Angelika Film Center and First & 62nd Cinemas.

PLACE VENDÔME
Paris.

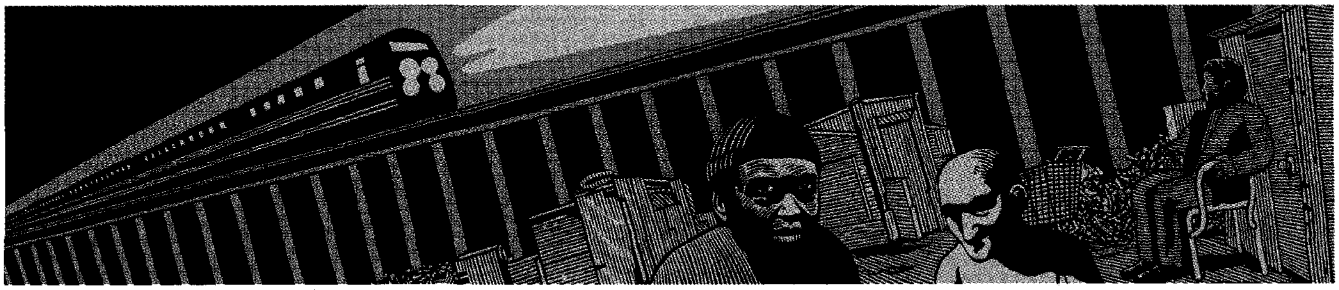
RIFIFI
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

SAVING GRACE
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema II, Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.

SUNSHINE (7/17/00)
Empire 25 and First & 62nd.

TIME REGAINED (6/19 & 6/26/00)
Cinema Village.

WONDERLAND (8/7/00)
Eastside Playhouse and Village East Cinemas.



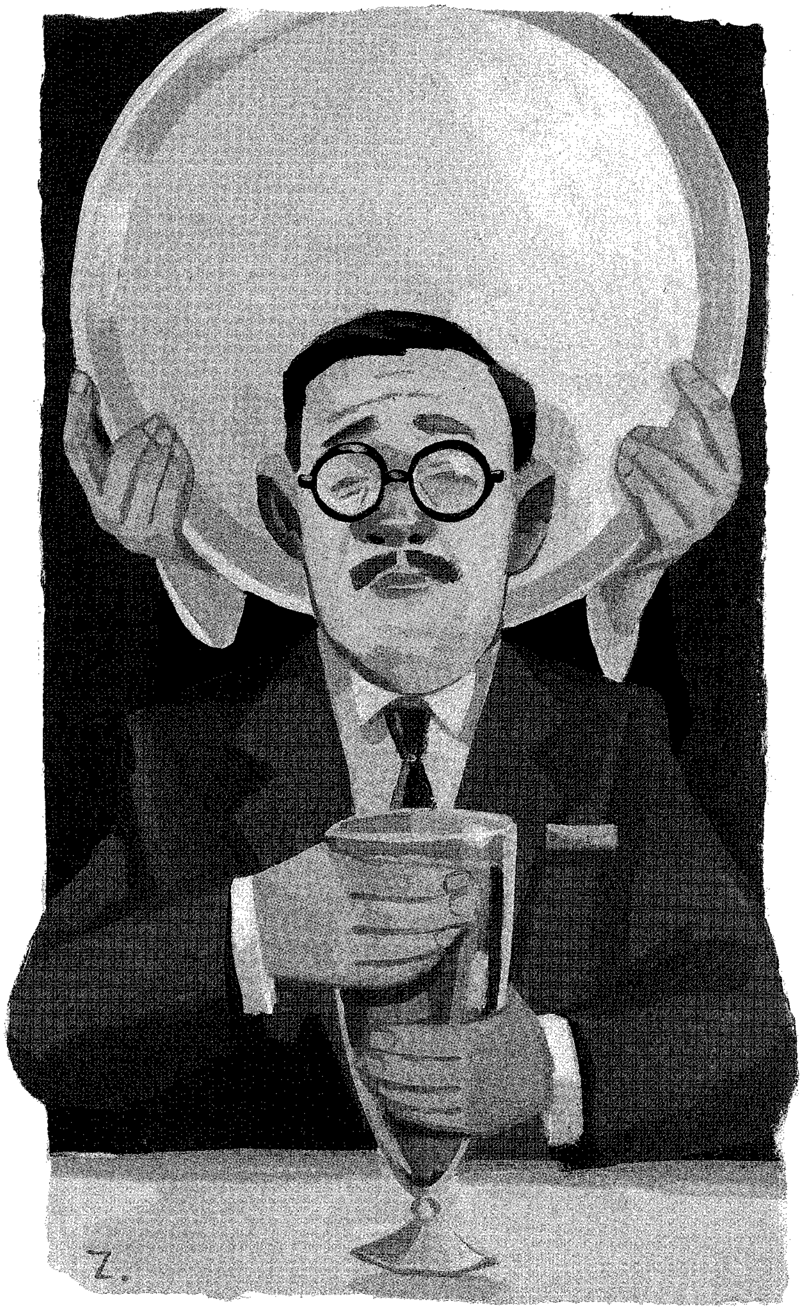
Marc Singer lived in an Amtrak tunnel underneath Manhattan for two years while filming his documentary, "Dark Days."

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



Akira Kurosawa's final film, "Madadayo," the story of a beloved professor, opens Sept. 1.

ZOHAR LAZAR

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 3: "Behind the Mirror: American Film in the Fifties." Sept. 2 at 12: "The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T." (1953, Roy Rowland). ♦ Sept. 2 at 2: "Star Spangled to Death" (1957-1960, Ken Jacobs). ♦ Sept. 3 at 2: "The Searchers" (1956, John Ford). ♦ Sept. 3 at 4:30: "Pull My Daisy" (†). ♦ Classic movies. Sept. 2-3 at 6:30: "The Bicycle Thief" (1948, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Aug. 30 at 7:30: "Topper" (1937, Norman Z. McLeod). ♦ Aug 31 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "La Ciudad" (1998, David Riker). ♦ Sept. 1-3: The New York International Latino Film Festival. Call for details. ♦ Sept. 4 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "A Night at the Opera" (†). ♦ Sept. 5 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "Magnificent Obsession" (1954, Douglas Sirk).

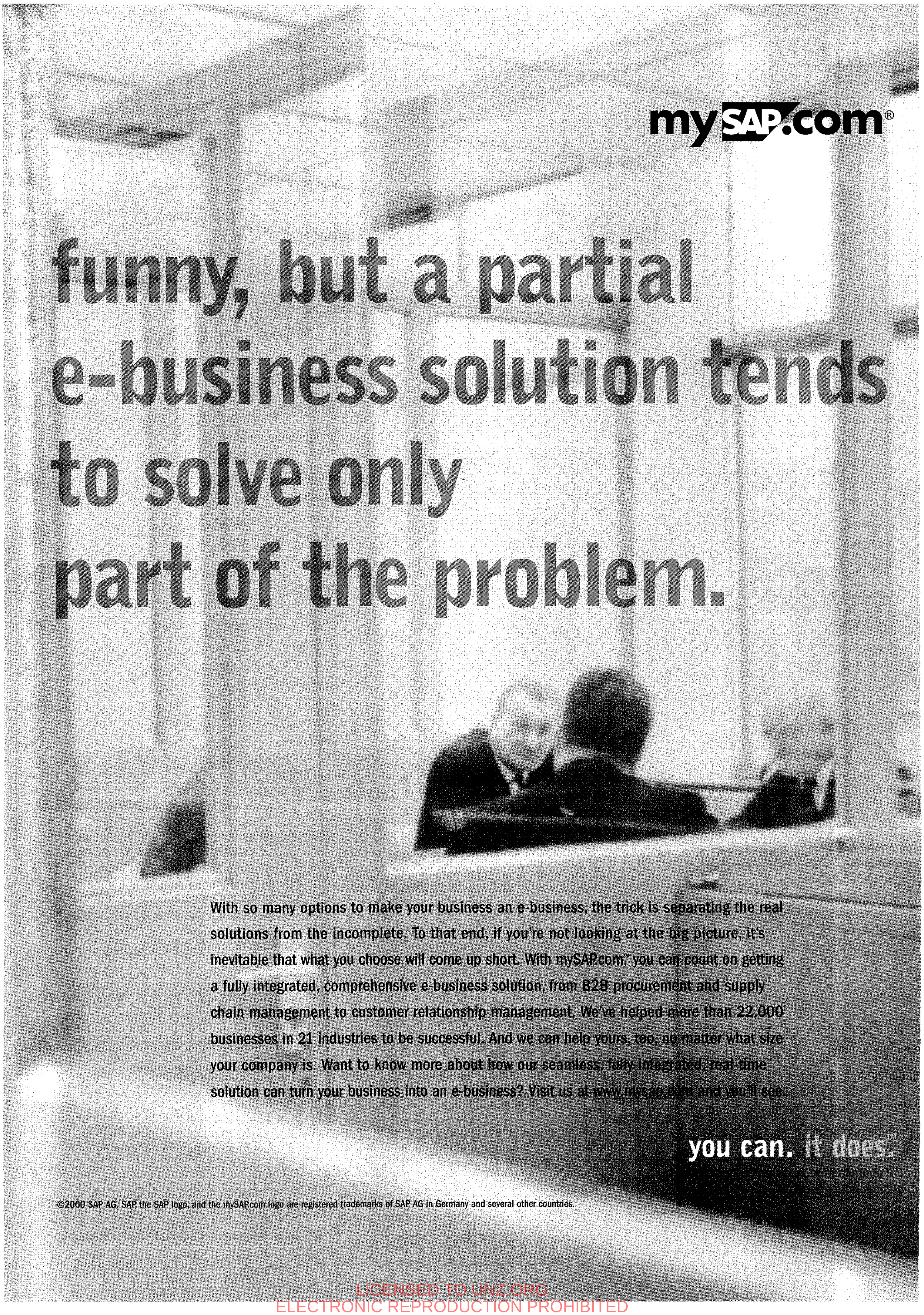
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through Sept. 14: "The Golden Age of Foreign Film." Aug. 30: "The Seven Samurai" (1954, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Aug. 31: "Los Olvidados" (†) and "The Exterminating Angel" (1962, Luis Buñuel; in Spanish). ♦ Sept. 1-2: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French) and "Jules and Jim" (1961, Truffaut; in French). ♦ Sept. 3: "The World of Apu" (1959, Satyajit Ray; in Bengali) and "Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors" (1964, Sergei Paradjanov; in Ukrainian). ♦ Sept. 4: "La Dolce Vita" (1960, Federico Fellini; in Italian). ♦ Sept. 5: "Black Orpheus" (1959, Marcel Camus; in Portuguese) and "Never on Sunday" (1960, Jules Dassin; in English and Greek).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Aug. 31 at 6 and Sept. 3 at 2: "Paisan" (1946, Roberto Rossellini; in Italian). ♦ Sept. 1 at 2:30 and Sept. 4 at 5: "Macbeth" (1948, Orson Welles). ♦ Sept. 1 at 6: "The Stranger" (1946, Welles). ♦ Sept. 1 at 8 and Sept. 4 at 2: "The Third Man" (1949, Carol Reed). ♦ Sept. 2 at 2: "The Bicycle Thief" (1948, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian). ♦ Sept. 2 at 5: "Shoeshine" (1946, De Sica; in Italian). ♦ Sept. 2 at 5: "Pinky" (1949, Elia Kazan). ♦ Sept. 3 at 5: "Rome, Open City" (1945, Rossellini; in Italian). ♦ Sept. 5 at 6: "The Storm Within" (1948, Jean Cocteau; in French).

MUSEUM OF TELEVISION AND RADIO
25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Aug. 30-Sept. 3 at 2: "Madison Avenue Goes to Washington," a history of political television advertisements.

THE SCREENING ROOM
54 Varick St. (334-2100)—Sept. 1-2 at 7:50: Episodes 1 and 2 of "The Decalogue" (†).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Sept. 6: "A Quiet Storm: The Cinema of Valerio Zurlini." All films are in Italian. Aug. 30 at 1 and 6 and Sept. 3 at 6:30: "The Girl with the Suitcase" (1961). ♦ Aug. 30 at 3:45 and 8:30, Aug. 31 at 1:15 and 6:15, and Sept. 2 at 6:15: "Family Diary" (1962). ♦ Aug. 31 at 3:30 and 8:30, Sept. 1 at 2 and 6, and Sept. 3 at 1:15: "La Soldatesse" (1965). ♦ Sept. 1 at 8:30, Sept. 2 at 1:15, and Sept. 4 at 3 and 8: "The Desert of Tartars" (1976). ♦ Sept. 2 at 4:15: "Black Jesus" (1968). ♦ Sept. 2 at 8:30 and Sept. 3 at 3:45 and 8:45: "The Professor" (1972).



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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
TOP OF THE SECOND, ALL TIED UP

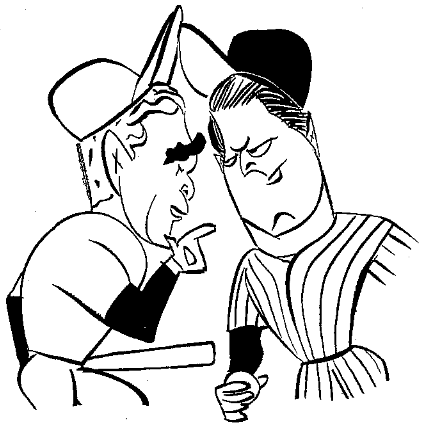
The interminable pennant races are over; the fall classic is under way at last. Is it trivializing to think of a Presidential campaign as a baseball season? If so, which of the two pastimes does the comparison demean? Or does it exalt them both? Either way, they are alike in their bizarre, incorrigible Americanness and their solipsistic (though not wholly unreasonable) fancy that whoever comes out on top is the champion of not just the country but the world. Both baseball and politics have steadily lost ground to faster-paced diversions. Both have tried the public's patience with an unseemly chasing after money. Both came late to what is nowadays called inclusiveness: Koufax and Lieberman, or no Koufax and Lieberman, the front office remains scandalously monochromatic. (This year's Republicans are a little like the gingerly 1955 Yankees, with Colin Powell as Elston Howard. And George W. Bush? No Branch Rickey he.)

So let's play hardball, as the pundits say. The conventions were the first inning. Now—with the score even (at around 45–45, according to the polls)—we're into the second, when the candidates run around the country repeating the themes of their acceptance speeches. The debates will be the heavy-hitting middle frames, and the final week of the campaign—when the crowd comes to its feet, whipped into what the candidates hope will be a frenzy by massive television buys—will be the bottom of the ninth.

But enough (or almost enough—these baseball metaphors, once entered into, are devilish hard to get out of) from the color booth. Let's take a look at a preliminary box score, as drawn mostly from those acceptance speeches, which, so far, are pretty nearly all there has been of the general-election campaign.

Style-wise, it's no contest: Bush's was by far the better speech qua speech—well written, well organized, and full of clever setups and payoffs, thanks to the efforts of its principal drafter, a thirty-six-year-old former *U.S. News & World Report* journalist named Michael Gerson. What this tells us about Bush is that he is smart enough to engage competent help, and disciplined enough to keep the resulting product from being ruined. These are important things to know. Al Gore's speech was clunky and wheezy by comparison. But it was far more revealing, because it seems to have been written mostly by Gore himself. Of course, similar claims have been made in the past on behalf of other Presidential nominees. Some candidates have even been known to copy out their speechwriters' work in longhand, usually on a yellow legal pad, which is then flourished as proof of authorship. This year's equivalent was a photograph of Gore hunched over his laptop. But the evidence this time is exceptionally strong. We can be reasonably sure that the candidate wrote a draft that was then tinkered with by his speechwriters, rather than the usual other way around. For better or for worse, Gore's speech was an authentic artifact of his mind and spirit—apparently for better, judging from its success in turning a blowout into a squeaker.

When the diagnostic content of the two speeches is picked apart and tabulated, an interesting thing happens. It becomes difficult to tell which candidate is demanding an immediate end to the policies of the past eight years and which is calling for their triumphant extension. Both seem happy with the underlying status quo. "This is a remarkable moment in the life of our nation" was how one of them put it. "Never has



Bush vs. Gore

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

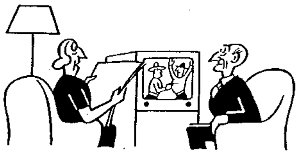
the promise of prosperity been so vivid." (That happens to have been Bush talking, but it could just as easily have been Gore.) Neither talks about high unemployment, high inflation, high interest rates, or intractable foreign wars, perhaps because these maladies seem to have been consigned to history's dustbin (or maybe just its recycling center). According to Candidate A, the country's problems include an inadequate education system; a health-care system that leaves millions uninsured and fails to make affordable prescription drugs available to old folks; the persistence of poverty; and a social-security system in need of protection and reform. According to Candidate B, the problems include all of the above, plus crime, gun violence, the corrupting effects of campaign finance, discrimination against gays and other minorities, and a trade regime that does too little to combat child labor, the exploitation of workers, and environmental degradation.

The paradox—that Candidate B, the representative of the incumbent Administration, finds more fault with the way things are than does his throw-the-rascals-out opponent—deepens in the details. On education, for example, the specific ills that Bush identifies are low reading achievement in the poorest schools, the practice of social promotion regardless of achievement, and a lack of accountability. Gore's indictment is broader: insufficient aid for college tuition; gross failures in providing day care, after-school care, and preschool education; public schools that are crumbling and overcrowded; classes that are too large. But the paradox disappears when one examines the remedies the two men propose. If Gore is more willing to acknowledge public problems, perhaps that is because he is more willing to offer public solutions. Bush wants to use the budget surplus mainly for tax cuts, of which the roaring, rampant lion's share would go to the already well-off. For the rest, he offers mainly a promise to "give taxpayers new incentives to donate to charity." Those incentives had better be good, considering that he has slated the existing ones—high marginal income-tax rates and the inheritance tax—for elimination.

Be all that as it may, both Bush and Gore deserve credit for a campaign that has been astonishingly clean. There may not be a whole lot of joy, but at least there's no mud in Mudville. So far.

—Hendrik Hertzberg

WORKING TITLES
THE TROUBLE WITH SITCOMS



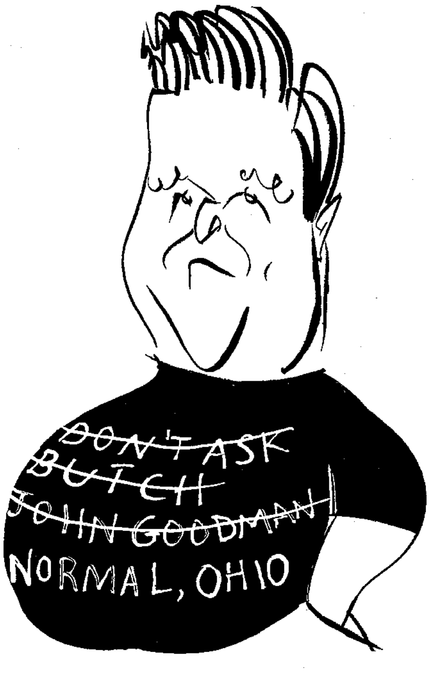
Tim Doyle never expected his new sitcom, "People Who Fear People," to be chosen for the fall schedule. ABC executives seemed unenthusiastic about the show, a "Seinfeld"-like look at an anxious woman and four anxious men in Manhattan. Then word filtered down that Michael Eisner, the chairman of the Walt Disney Company, which owns ABC, had chuckled at the pilot. Suddenly, "People" was in the lineup, Friday nights at eight-thirty. "Eisner liked everything about it," Doyle, one of the show's executive producers, said recently. "Then, I imagine, probably in an elevator on his way to the helicopter, he said over his shoulder, 'But lose the title.' So we've spent hundreds of man-hours trying to come up with a new title that's appropriately meaningless."

ABC hired a "namer," Cheryl Kellough, to help. Kellough rechristens more than thirty shows a year; it was she who transmuted the leaden movie title "Teeny Weenies" into the box-office gold of "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids." " 'People Who Fear People' sounds too neurotic," Kellough said the other day. "Viewers might think the characters are phobic and annoying." Within forty-eight hours, Kellough had churned out ninety-three alternative titles, including "Here They Come," "Day by Day," and "All the Same"—"I always throw in a few generic ones," she said—along with such counterphobic, party-down options as "Five Alive," "My Amigos," and "Ready, Set, Life."

"You have only a few weeks to try to attract an audience, so the networks always want 'bigger' titles, meaning more inclusive," she explained. "That's why 'Don't Ask' "—a new Fox show about a gay man, played by John Goodman—"has been changed to 'Normal, Ohio.' 'Don't Ask' just sounds a little gay."

As the fall season looms, the networks traditionally behave like nervous parents who hope that the right haircut will get their child off to a great start at school. This summer, the producers of "Don't Ask" flirted with the names "Butch," "Goodman," and "John Goodman" before settling on "Normal, Ohio"; Fox's "Don't Get Me Started" became "Grounded for Life"; NBC's "Dog Years" was modified to "Dog Days"; and ABC's "Lost and Found" was improved to "Geena" and then "The Geena Davis Show." After all, it's much easier to change the title than to change the concept, the cast, the writing staff, or the Nielsen ratings. Last spring, a gritty ABC drama about a mental hospital was going to be called "Bellevue," then "The River," then "Bedlam," then "Rivervue." The network finally settled on "Wonderland." The show still sank after two episodes.

A show's name should sound fresh yet familiar. Those ideas may be incompatible, but incompatible ideas are the mother's milk of network television. "Writers want a name that conveys that the show can be about anything—they don't want to tie their hands," Eric Gilliland, an executive producer of CBS's forthcoming sitcom "Welcome to New York" (née "Mr. New York"), says. "Networks want 'Pow!' But not *too* much pow."


~~DON'T ASK~~
~~BUTCH~~
~~JOHN GOODMAN~~
NORMAL, OHIO

John Goodman

"My personal test is putting the name

in a conversation people would have the next day at the water cooler,” Mike Scully, the executive producer of “The Simpsons,” says. “ ‘Did you see “Cheers”?’ works. ‘Did you see “Two Guys, a Girl, and a Pizza Place”?’ doesn’t. Keep it short and simple.” Last year, ABC abridged “Two Guys, a Girl, and a Pizza Place” to “Two Guys and a Girl.” Naming theory holds that it should be cut even further, to “Two Guys,” but that might sound a little, you know, gay.

Simplicity itself can be confusing, because the title so often bears little relation to the show—the two seem to have been paired up at a boozy Hollywood key party. “These Friends of Mine” was the first-season title not of “Friends”—which had four working titles of its own, including “Friends Like Us”—but of “Ellen.” “Life and Stuff” was the working title not of “That’s Life” or “It’s Like, You Know . . .” but of “Roseanne.” (And “One Day at a Time” was not about an alcoholic but about a lecherous super, mostly.)

Almost every show gets cancelled, usually sooner rather than later, but a lousy name hastens the axe. The tombstones in television’s vast graveyard suggest several additional naming rules:

Don’t predict your own sell-by date (“The Late Summer Early Fall Bert Convy Show”).

Don’t remind viewers of their sixth-grade field trip (“Museum of Science and Industry”).

Don’t get folksy (“O.K. Crackerby”) or kooky (“Kay Kyser’s Kollege of Musical Knowledge”) or cutesy (“The Secret Diary of Desmond Pfeiffer,” whose name was pronounced, for no good reason, “Puh-Feiffer”).

And, finally, don’t make the critic’s job too easy. ABC’s forthcoming “The Geena Davis Show,” formerly “Lost and Found,” was an obvious candidate for retitling. “Reviewers were just chomping at the bit to say something like ‘ “Lost and Found” should stay lost,’ ” Mike Scully said. Shows that flouted this rule and vanished include “On the Air,” “Not for Publication,” “Too Something,” “The Trouble with Larry,” and “Stop Susan Williams.”

Emphasizing Geena Davis’s participation in “The Geena Davis Show” was also a no-brainer, for the same reason that the prime-time schedule is studded with such shows as “Titus,” “Everybody Loves Raymond,” “The Drew Carey Show,” and “Bette,” CBS’s new sitcom starring Bette Midler. Branding a star is the easiest way to pierce the promotional clutter: here’s that person you liked before, in a new situation that emphasizes all his zany and outrageous—but endearing!—qualities. Hence “The Bill Cosby Show,” “Cosby,” “The Cosby Mysteries,” “The Cosby Show,” “Cos,” and “The New Bill Cosby Show.”

Networks like a star’s name in the title; writers don’t. “If you name a show after a star like Roseanne,” Al Jean, the co-creator of “The Critic” and “Teen Angel,” says, “it gives the star greater hunger for power and money, and makes it much more likely that you, the creator, will be fired during the first argument with that star.” Writers cherish the legend of a creative clash between Tracey Ullman and James L. Brooks, the executive producer of Ullman’s comedy show on Fox. Clinching her argument, Ullman reminded him, “It’s called ‘The Tracey Ullman Show,’ and I’m Tracey Ullman.” Brooks replied, “Yes, and I’m The Show.”

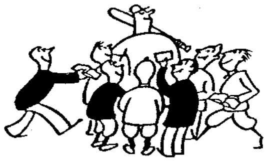
“Titles are irrelevant,” Dean Valentine, the president of the UPN network, argues. “TV is a repeat medium, and if you repeat a name often enough it becomes noise. Seinfeld, Seinfeld, Seinfeld. All our new titles for fall are completely generic—‘Girlfriends,’ ‘Freedom,’ ‘Level Nine.’ There’s *never* any correlation in the audience research between the catchiness of the title and people’s eagerness to watch the show. Calling a show ‘Hitler’s Here’ will lose you viewers, but calling it ‘Warm Puppies’ won’t gain you any. The name is just the thing you have to get past.”

Cheryl Kellough, the namer, believes otherwise. Two of her suggested new titles for “People Who Fear People” were “The Trouble with Life” and “Who Wants to Be Normal.” Skilled artisans at ABC welded the two notions, and, *voilà*, the show had its new (and vulnerable) title: “The Trouble with Normal.”

“We’re a good show with a new name that no one understands,” Tim Doyle said. “And as long as viewers don’t confuse us with ‘Norm’ or ‘Normal, Ohio’ or ‘Brutally Normal,’ we’ve got a decent chance to be on the air past Halloween.”

—*Tad Friend*

DEPT. OF DISTANCES
THE HOME-RUN KING



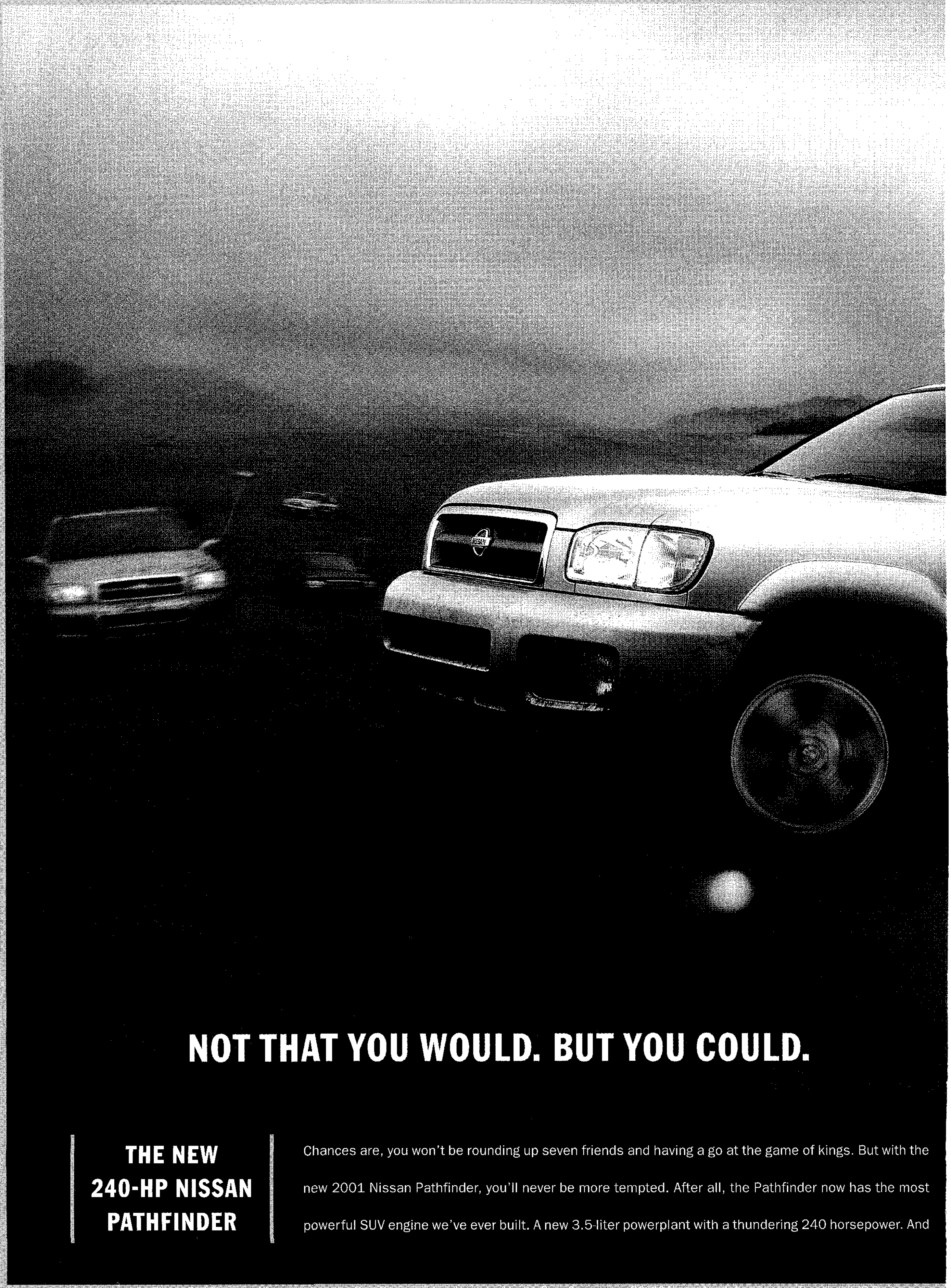
It is good for softball players to be big, and if they are as big as Mike Macenko so much the better. Macenko is six feet three inches tall and weighs three hundred pounds. He is broad rather than fat, with the husky build of a beer drinker who can hit. He looks like a cathedral door.

If Macenko is not the best softball player who ever lived, he surely is the greatest at the game’s signature event—the home run. He has hit ten in one game, sixteen in a doubleheader, eight hundred and forty-four in a single season, and, by his count, six thousand three hundred and three in the course of a twenty-five-year career that ended, three years ago, with his induction into three of the sport’s Halls of Fame.

On a recent afternoon, Macenko visited the Heckscher softball fields, in Central Park, where the city’s Corporate Sports League was wrapping up its regular season. Pricewaterhouse Coopers, which hadn’t won a game all season, was playing Philip Morris. Some of the Pricewaterhouse Coopers men wore uniform shirts, and some wore baseball knickers. They all wore cleats. Macenko sensed that they were serious players, despite their ragtag appearance. “This looks like it would be a fun corporate league,” Macenko said, his voice thick and a little wheezy. “I got no problem watching these guys play.”

He’d brought along a duffel full of gear, but after surveying the tight dimensions of the fields he concluded that he’d better leave his bats in the bag. Given how far he hits the ball—he has smacked softballs out of Detroit’s old Tiger Stadium—he saw that it would be safer for everyone if he just sat in the bleachers and observed the locals. They were, to his eyes, an exotic breed. “These guys have to work sixty, eighty hours a week,” he said. “They got a life with the financial department. They don’t have time to practice.”

During his career, “Big Cat” Mike Macenko, who is forty-four, played as many as three hundred and fifty games a



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year, barnstorming for various amateur slow-pitch teams based near his home, the Cleveland suburb of Brunswick. These days, he spends most of his time promoting the game and posting swing tips and motivational credos on his Web site, www.Bigcat844.com.

As he watched, Pricewaterhouse's burliest player walloped a shot deep to left—a real bomb. "That was very impressive," Macenko said, nodding.

Pricewaterhouse Coopers went on to win. Soon, another team, representing the accounting firm Arthur Andersen, arrived for a game. As they warmed up, Macenko was approached by a player who had overheard Macenko decline a challenge to launch a softball over a distant cluster of trees.

"How far can you hit?" the man asked.

"Four hundred feet," Macenko replied, modestly.

"Three-thirty I can believe," the man said. "But not four hundred."

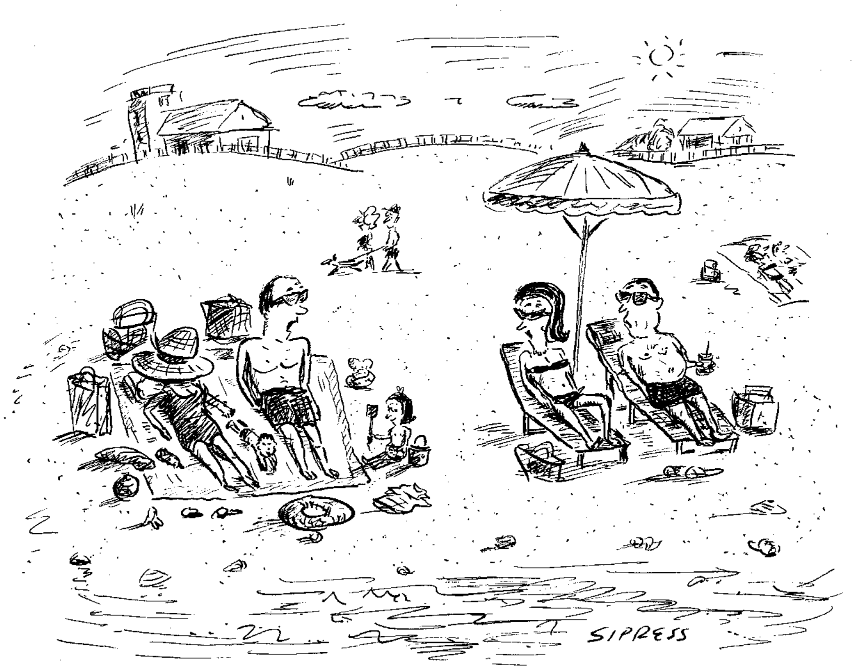
"I hit one out of Tiger Stadium," Macenko said.

The man scoffed. "What, down the line?"

Macenko shook his head but said nothing. He lingered in the bleachers, watching the Pricewaterhouse men change from cleats to sneakers and listening as they talked about their evening plans. It stunned him that some of them were returning to the office.

"They work second shift?" Macenko said. "After a game like that in my home town, they'd go straight to the parking lot and if the beer wasn't there they'd go right to the tavern. They go together, the tavern and the game."

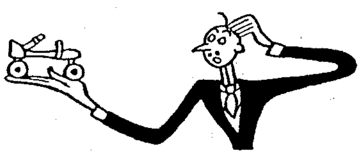
—*Michael Shapiro*



"We're not year-round people, weekend people, or summer people. We're last-ten-days-in-August people."

• •

LOST AND FOUND
THE BOTTOM OF THE POND



A few mornings ago, an engineer walked out toward the middle of the Pond in Central Park, reached into the water, came up with a long rusty chain, and used it to pull a giant plug from an underwater drain. It was the latest step in a plan to spruce up the Pond, the three-and-a-quarter-acre, seven-foot-deep body of water situated at the southeast corner of the Park, in the shadow of the Plaza. The Parks Department is planning new paths, new plants, and a new island. But first department engineers had to remove the old water and all that had been tossed into it since 1979, when the Pond was last drained. So the plug was pulled and the murky green waters began to recede, revealing decades of loot half sunk in the mud.

On a low-water day in the draining's first week, three Parks Department employees—a press officer and two guys in charge of the operation—conducted a quick tour of the muck. The men strolled along the muddy shoreline and identified some of what had formerly been at the bottom of the Pond. This is what they found:

a hair-curling set;

a sock;

a car axle;

several small snails;

a ski mitten (blue);

two umbrellas (the skeletal remains);

a Pepsi can with an old pull-top;

a fifty-five-gallon drum ("That's what the department used to use for garbage cans," one of the men said. "See the holes in the bottom to let out the garbage juice?");

a red-and-yellow birdhouse;

a child's rain boot (brown);

a softball;

a child's car seat ("That's an early car seat—there's no three-point harness. I have kids");

an old water fountain;

two parking meters, full of change;

a light pole ("Standard issue. You always see at least one light pole whenever you're draining something");

a tricycle;

a Kate Spade handbag (empty);

a Reebok running shoe;

a box of matches;

a toy machine gun;

a man's dress shoe;

a portable electric heater;

a Brother WP2600Q word processor, equipped with a type-font disk labelled "A. Eng." and still holding a three-and-a-half-inch computer disk, which was jammed and could not be withdrawn, and which immediately caused the parks employees to speculate on (1) whether the disk might contain a lost manuscript of some value, and (2) how some disgruntled New Yorker must have stormed into the Park and heaved the word processor into the Pond—a thought that prompted a moment of silence.

"It's always less stuff than you'd think," one of the guys said finally.

—*Robert Sullivan*

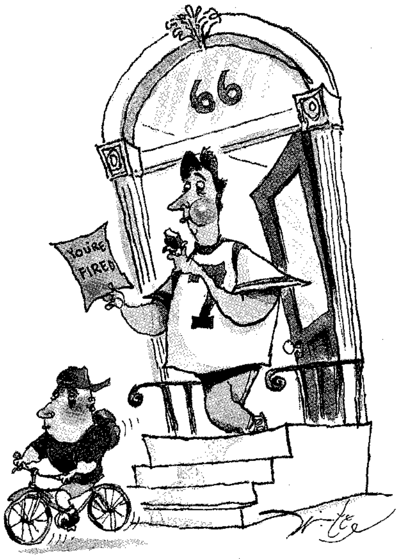
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
HOW KOZMO IS GETTING KILLED BY ITS CUSTOMERS

When you treat customers like kings, they quickly turn into tyrants. And there are a lot of tyrants out there right now. Never before have companies so gleefully abased themselves by subsidizing their customers' purchases, catering to their every whim, and burning up tens of millions of dollars in pursuit of that elusive thing called "loyalty." This has made for some very happy shoppers and for some very sick companies. Take the delivery service Kozmo, which recently announced that it was cancelling its plans to go public.

Kozmo's basic problem is simple: all customers are not created equal. Good customers spend a lot of money over a long period of time. Bad customers are freeloaders who aren't worth even what it costs to serve them. To make money, you have to dodge the bad customers and keep the good ones. Sounds obvious, but it was a lesson that Kozmo never learned. In the haze of the New Economy, what investors cared about was how many customers a company had, and not how much they cost. So companies were encouraged to spoil us rotten. And none did so more avidly than businesses that specialize in "last-mile" delivery, like Kozmo and Urbanfetch.

These are companies that bring stuff from their warehouses to your door free—stereo systems, chewing gum, lipstick—usually within an hour. Kozmo, for instance, is basically a video store with a fleet of delivery guys on bicycles. Once, the living was easy: Kozmo raised two hundred and fifty million dollars in capital; it operates in eleven American cities. Urbanfetch, which offers a similar service, started operations in New York last October and just opened a London office. Millions of dollars later, it's clear that there are plenty of people in big cities who are happy to have ice cream, video games, and even DVD players delivered in less time than it takes to watch an episode of "E.R." But it's far from clear whether anyone can turn a profit making these people happy. Last year, Kozmo lost over twenty-six million dollars on just $3.5 million in sales, and it recently announced that it was laying off two hundred and seventy-five workers. It's now talking to Urbanfetch about a merger. But what's killing these businesses isn't their competitors. It's their customers.

There are plenty of sound businesses that spend a lot of money up front to acquire customers: they advertise, they give away toaster ovens, whatever. The investment pays off because every time the customer buys from them after that they start to make the money back. Not so with Kozmo, which spends on average a dollar-fifty for every dollar it takes in. Encouraged by Wall Street, Kozmo has treated its customers like pampered babies, tickling their toes, plying them with applesauce, smiling at their tantrums. No wonder they turned into little terrors: *We want our Reese's Pieces and we want 'em now!* According to the aptly named analyst Chris Vroom, of Credit Suisse First Boston, Kozmo's couriers carry just two orders every hour, and each of those orders is worth an average of eleven dollars. Every time a customer places an order, Kozmo loses money. And the more customers it has, the more money it loses. Kozmo isn't a business. It's a charity.



MICHAEL WITTE

Urbanfetch, Kozmo's major competitor, seems to be doing a better job. For one thing, it offers more high-end items, like Palm Pilots, TVs, and air-conditioners. To deliver TVs, you need truck fleets rather than bicyclists, and that costs more, but then again you make more money selling a television than you do renting a videotape. More than thirty per cent of Urbanfetch's revenues now come from consumer electronics, and its average order size is forty-three dollars, which is four times Kozmo's.

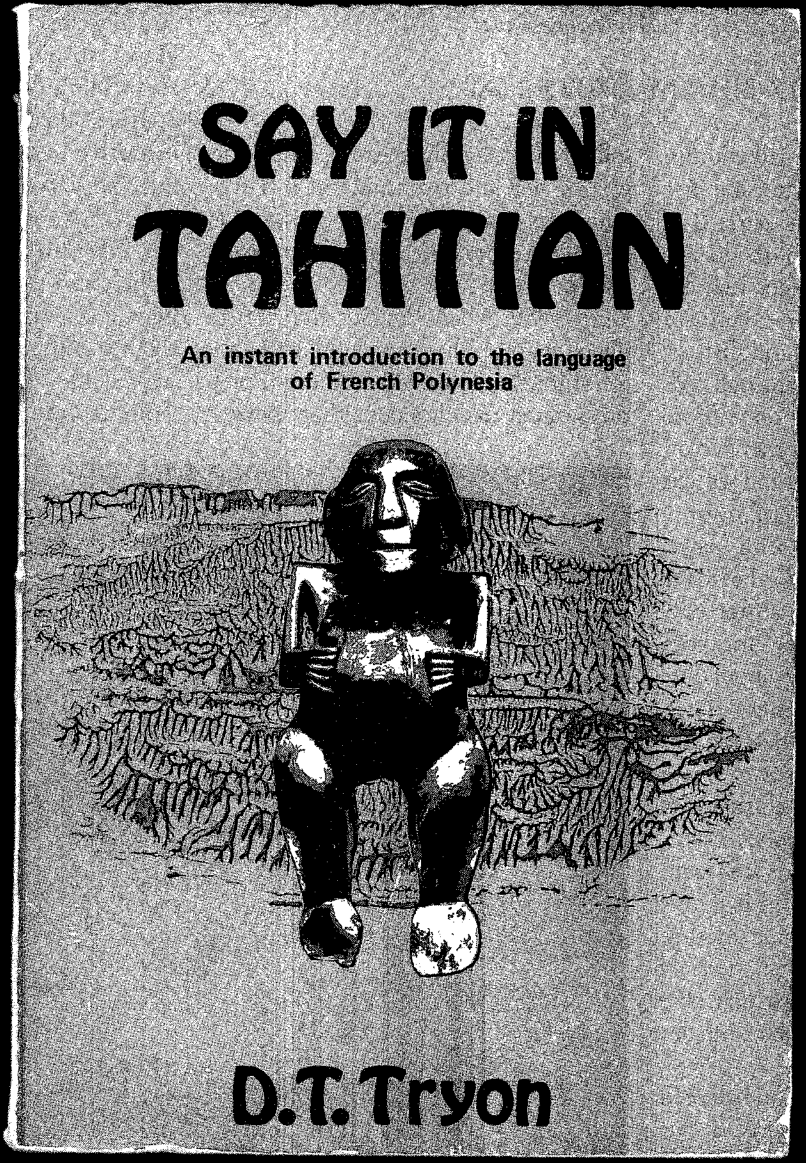
For Urbanfetch, the goal was to get rid of bad customers. "We realized that there was a significant chunk of customers that never make profitable orders," its C.E.O., Ross Stevens, says, explaining why the company instituted a ten-dollar minimum in June. (Kozmo has just followed suit, with a five-dollar minimum.) "So the point of the minimum wasn't to get those people who are now spending four dollars an order to start spending eleven dollars an order. It was to get them to stop using the service." There may be a New Economy mantra in that: know when to fire your customers.

Even if Urbanfetch does everything right, though, last-mile delivery is always going to be a tough racket. Consumer electronics are a higher-margin business, but there's a trade-off: how often does a customer buy a TV? And, once you're selling Sonys, you're competing, in some sense, with everyone from the Wiz to U.P.S. But the biggest problem is that, having mollycoddled your customers for so long, you may not be able to keep them under a new, tough-love regime. "These companies have essentially taught customers bad habits, like having fifty-cent candy bars delivered," Tim Laseter, an E-commerce consultant at Booz-Allen & Hamilton, says. "And now they have to figure out how to get people to unlearn those habits, or they'll fail."

But wasn't the Internet supposed to make dealing with customers cheaper and easier? Well, for real Internet businesses—like Yahoo and eBay—it does. For them, the cost of servicing a new customer is almost zero: delivering content and running auctions for twenty million people isn't much more expensive than doing it for ten million people. Each new customer represents almost pure profit. Not so for Kozmo and Urbanfetch. Despite their pretty Web sites, they are in the business of moving parcels from one place to another. The more customers they get, the more delivery people they have to hire. Time was these companies were dying for more customers. Now they're dying from them.

—*James Surowiecki*

August 29, 1978. Left on beach after one too many mai tais.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ANNALS OF STYLE

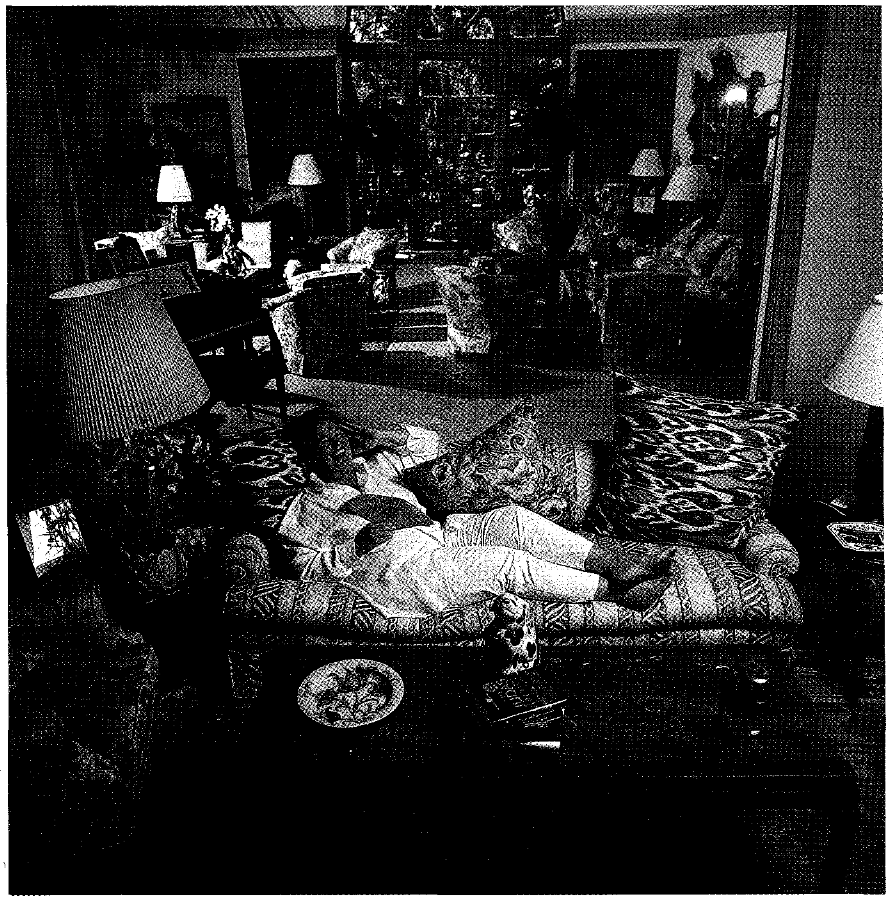
EVERYTHING LILLY

How a shocking-pink dress became a way of life.

BY LARISSA MacFARQUHAR

Lilly Pulitzer's feet are small, plump, and a little on the square side, her toenails painted a vivacious pink. It is important to notice the polish on her toes because though her feet may be bare they are not *au naturel*—these are not hippie feet. It is important, further, to take note of the color of the nail polish, since Lilly Pulitzer has done more for the color pink than any other person alive. The soles are hardened and scuffed from nearly seventy years of unprotected contact with beach sand, pavement, and patio tiles, though they have been soothed, too, by the softer textures of lawns, pool water, and sofa cushions. Any conversation about Pulitzer is bound to arrive, sooner or later, at the subject of her feet, because her longstanding habit of going everywhere barefoot is widely agreed to encapsulate the pleasurably informal life she has created for herself in the temperate island climate of Palm Beach. And it is this pleasurably informal life which, in turn, is taken as the raison d'être of the Lilly Pulitzer line of clothing, for which, over the past forty years, she has become deservedly famous.

There is so little separation between Lilly Pulitzer the person and Lilly Pulitzer the label that an item of Lilly Pulitzer clothing is known, in the casually intimate mode that the clothes inspire, as "a Lilly." "Lilly" may also be employed as an adjective (usually in the form "*so* Lilly"), denoting anything reminiscent of the person, the clothes, or the world view that the two together have come to represent. When Pulitzer was asked to elaborate on a designation of "so Lilly" that she had bestowed upon a person, for instance, she described the person further as "Cute! Shiny! Scrubbed! Smiling! So cute!" Pulitzer is not a clothing designer in the usual sense of the word. She can't draw, she can't cut, she can't sew. She has no interest in fashion. She started selling clothes only because, when she was in her late twenties, she'd had a seamstress stitch up a few dresses for her and people started asking her where she got them.



Lilly Pulitzer at home. She had no interest in fashion, but Palm Beach ladies—even Jackie Kennedy—loved the "Lilly" dress. Photograph by Maggie Steber.

In 1959, when Pulitzer first introduced them, Lillies were bold little cotton shifts that looked like children's play dresses, cut in silhouettes that stylized any body into a geometric shape. The shifts were brilliantly colored in shocking pinks and oranges and thrilling greens (Pulitzer is the originator of the notorious preppy pink-and-green combination), and they were printed with giant animals and plants. Almost at once, they became extraordinarily popular in Palm Beach. At the Bath and Tennis Club, at the Everglades Club, everybody wore them. In the 1966 book "Palm Beach," John Ney describes Pulitzer attending Field Day at the Palm Beach Day School: "Confident and big and brown and round like a Hawaiian queen, she wears a kind of Aunt Jemima headdress and big gold earrings above [her] Lilly and bare feet beneath. . . . In Palm Beach, she is the queen. Every woman present presses in to say a word, shake her hand, touch her. She is in her Lilly, they are in their Lillies, and they are deeply grateful to her for having invented a uniform for them, a uniform which has given them a way of life." One woman left instructions in her will that she was to be buried in her favorite pink Lilly. It was as though the island had been transformed into an enormous living work of Pop art, the Palm Beach ladies in identical shapes and dozens of colors, multiplying all over the island like Elvises in a Warhol silk screen. "It was like a weird cult," Pulitzer says. "People loved them."

And because most people who lived in Palm Beach lived in other places as well—in summer homes in Newport, or the Hamptons, or Nantucket—the cult spread.

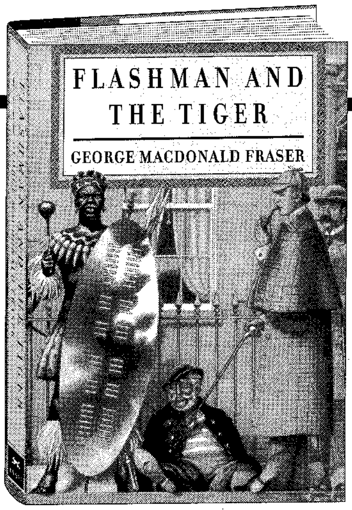
If you ask Pulitzer why her clothing line took off, she will say it was the time, the place, and the name. It was the early sixties, and because the Kennedys wintered in Palm Beach the island had come to epitomize grace at leisure. Jackie and Caroline Kennedy were photographed in matching Lillies; Pulitzer herself was part of the same social sphere—she had attended Chapin and Miss Porter's with Jackie Kennedy. But if Jackie Kennedy and the Pulitzer name lent the dresses a certain glamour, it wasn't glamour, exactly, that was the key to their appeal. Lillies were comfortable and comforting: they were easy to put on, easy on the figure, and seemed to capture everything that was carefree and childlike about daytime in a place like Palm Beach. They were great hangover dresses: they made you feel happy and clean again and ready to go.

Now, at sixty-eight, Pulitzer is witnessing a repetition of her first great surge in popularity. She closed down her company in 1984 ("After twenty-five years, it was done, for God's sake!" she says). But in 1992, at a time when costume had faded to neutral, and all was black or beige or gray, a group of people from the fashion industry visited her in her home in Palm Beach and asked permission to start up the Lilly Pulitzer label once again. Eight years later, the company is doing even more business than it did the first time around, and it employs a small group of young socialites as advisers to make sure it does not stray too far from its origins. This year especially, Lilly prints have been influencing other designers. Michael Kors conceived his spring 2000 clothes in electric hues and palm fronds, and titled the collection "Palm Bitch." The mark of Lilly has been detected as far afield as Bill Blass, Cynthia Rowley, and Oscar de la Renta.

In some ways, Pulitzer's emblematically Lilly life has greatly changed since she first started designing; in other ways, it hasn't changed at all. She still does exactly what she pleases, whatever makes her happy and comfortable, without worrying about what other people think. She serves as a consultant to her revived company, inspecting all the new prints and shapes in order to decide whether they are Lilly or not-Lilly, but she doesn't involve herself in its day-to-day activities. When she is not with her children and grandchildren, she spends a lot of time alone in her house. "I don't see that many people, and the people I see I don't see a hell of a lot," she says. "I dropped out of the drinking group, I dropped out of the four-o'clock-in-the-morning group. I outgrew them. When people ask me to dinner parties now, I say, I'm sorry, I have nothing I'm going to be doing, but I would rather stay at home. I try to say it nicely. I just don't feel like making the effort—that's what it boils down to."

Pulitzer spends a lot of time working in her garden, which she calls her jungle—a tangled grove of palms and banana trees and ferns and gardenias and ficus and hibiscus that extends for an acre—and in her house, where everything is covered in some sort of floral fabric, even furnishings that might seem immune, like table legs and the doors of the refrigerator. She is often to be found on a sofa reading, wearing her glasses, whose round black plastic frames are so enormous that the glasses look like some sort of underwater equipment. "It's nice if people don't exist in your world when you don't care for them," Pulitzer's friend Jerry Beebe says. "Every detail of how Lilly lives is carefully planned. Every frond in her garden is known to her. Everything is so effortless but nothing is effortless."

Pulitzer now wears her hair in a wiry blond bob—she finds gray hair depressing. She considers herself too old to wear the new Lilly dresses ("We don't make for dumpies and plumpies," she has said), so she sticks to a uniform of white cotton trousers, an old long-sleeved Lilly-print shirt, and, of course, bare feet. She doesn't much care how she looks. "The unfortunate thing is, I've never really liked clothes," she says. "Please. Look at me!" Jerry Beebe says, "Lilly was not beautiful. She was *jolie-laide*." In pictures taken of Pulitzer in the sixties there is nothing of the yielding seductress about her: she stares straight at the camera, not smiling. She is not so severe as she looks, however.



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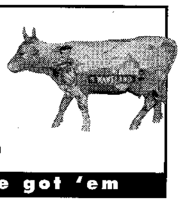

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"It's not really serious, but I am seeing another anchor."

Her old friend Mary Kendall describes her as "a big cozy house." She likes to feed people. She is also known to be a discreet source of financial assistance to friends whose funds have run low.

One afternoon, as happens not infrequently, Pulitzer made too much food for lunch. It may have been the fish that did it, by distracting her. Someone recently gave Pulitzer a plastic fish that, when a button is pressed, flaps its tail and sings "Don't Worry Be Happy." The trouble is that once its song gets in her head she can't get it out again. That day, she found herself so afflicted, and she swayed around the kitchen, dancing vaguely back and forth between the refrigerator and the stove. "Don't worry," she sang, shaking a potful of cooked ziti into a colander and then into a bowl. She dug a handful of butter out of a stick with her fingers, pushed it off onto the ziti, and followed it with a handful of cheese. "Be happy," she trailed off, as she tossed in a bowlful of chopped steak left over from dinner the night before.

Since there was lots to spare, she decided to take some over to the Cat Lady. The Cat Lady acquired her name because she feeds the feral cats on the island, of which there are a considerable number. She has made many enemies in Palm Beach, because people feel that the cats are a public nuisance; as a consequence, she has taken to launching feeding missions late at night, to avoid the attentions of the island's vigilant police.

The Cat Lady heard Pulitzer's white Volvo coming and padded outside. "Lilly!" she hailed.

Pulitzer eased herself carefully out of the car, balancing the pasta.

"Bless you," said the Cat Lady, taking the bowl.

The Cat Lady told Pulitzer that she had only just woken up, having been out on one of her forays particularly late the night before.

"The police used to be wonderful, and now they're like something out of Nazi Germany," the Cat Lady griped. "It's because these nouveau-riche types feel that everything has to be just so. What do you think, Lilly?"

"I think it's too much to worry about," Pulitzer said.

Palm Beach does not look like a place that would welcome feral cats. The avenues are lined with palm trees and the residential streets with tall hedges. Many of the houses are Spanish in style, because that's what was favored by Addison Mizner, the architect who effectively invented the Palm Beach architectural landscape, in the twenties. The island's colors are vivid but few: the lawns, the hedges, and the palms are green; the sea, the sky, and the pools are blue; the sidewalks are white; the houses are white or apricot. Its lines are distinct and perpendicular: the palm trees grow straight up from the pavement, the hedges are clipped to form a sheer vertical surface, and the pools are rectangles.

There are no cemeteries on Palm Beach; no laundromats; no fast-food restaurants; no hospitals. One of its two supermarkets, Publix, was required to paint murals on its exterior walls so that it would not look like a supermarket. The island has always been committed to a homogeneous aesthetic. Astonishingly, its two most prominent clubs, the Bath and Tennis and the Everglades, began to allow Jews in as guests only a couple of years ago; Jews and blacks are still not admitted as members. Palm Beach looks like what it is: the exquisite realization of a century-old collective fantasy—a place where there is no sickness, no ugliness, no death, no mediocrity, and no reminders of the petty labors required for the maintenance of perfection.

Lilly Pulitzer grew up wintering in Palm Beach, because when she was six her mother married Ogden Phipps.

The Phipps family is one of the oldest and wealthiest on the island. Every winter, Pulitzer and her parents rode down to Palm Beach in a private railroad car. After she graduated from high school, she spent three years working as a nurse's aide, in the Bronx and in Kentucky, and then, in her early twenties, she eloped with Peter Pulitzer, who was thought by many to be the most attractive man in Palm Beach. He had dated Grace Kelly and Jackie Kennedy.

Pulitzer in her twenties was a winsome eccentric. She tied her hair in pigtails, rarely wore underwear, kept fourteen dogs, and used to walk around with her pet rhesus monkey, Goony, on her shoulder. She put in a kitchen that sat twenty-six people, and gave raucous dinner parties at which the guests would help cook and then cap off the evening dancing around the stove. Soon kitchen dinner parties were all the rage. "The fifties were wonderful," she says. "Everything was fun and attractive and crazy. There was always music, always dancing, always something going on. We never put out cigarettes except in other cigarettes. Now the people I used to drink with are either dead or in A.A."

Pulitzer had three children, one after the other; after her third child was born, she had a nervous breakdown and ended up in a mental hospital in Westchester that people called Bloomingdale's, because of its uptown clientele. "I was in the hospital for about four months," she says. "I had a great time. It was like going back to boarding school—very regimented. The doctor there said, 'You're not happy because you're not doing anything,' and I said, 'I don't know how to do anything.' I'd always had everything done for me, always had my nanny and my mummy making up my mind. The doctor said, 'You've got to go out and find something to do.' "

She decided to start an orange-juice stall just off Worth Avenue, Palm Beach's main shopping street. It was a peculiar choice, akin to setting up a lemonade stand on Rodeo Drive, but because of Pulitzer's personality and lineage people found it, like her other eccentricities, charming. Peter Pulitzer gave his wife oranges from his groves, and she squeezed them and sold the

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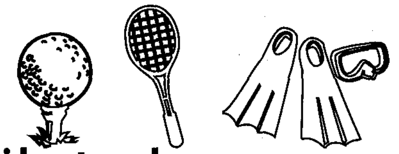

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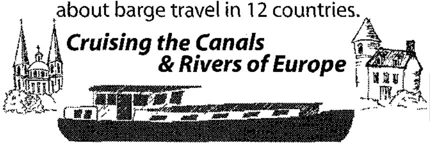

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juice. It was messy work, though, and she was ruining all her clothes, so she bought some cheap fabric from a five-and-dime printed with big bright patterns that wouldn't show the stains, and she found a seamstress to stitch it up into little shifts. Customers began to ask about the shifts, so she had a few more made and hung them in the juice stand. Soon, people were coming more for the shifts than the juice, so Pulitzer began making dresses full time. She started a sewing factory in Miami, and, to make her fabric, she found a group of young men down in Key West, émigrés from Broadway theatre, who had just opened a fabric-printing business. She would sit down with them and come up with long lists of plants and animals and colors that future prints would incorporate. "I was always on the road, bouncing around and happy," she says. "It was so fun you can't believe it. I spent three or four days every week in the factory, I couldn't tear myself out of there. What a blast! Yanking out those bolts to decide what was going to go into what—oh, God! It was all just like a fairy tale."

The business continued to grow in the impulsive, picnic spirit in which it had started. If Pulitzer had a friend who needed something to do, she would open a store in the town where the friend lived. She didn't allow stores to order specific patterns; the clothes would arrive as a surprise. The prints were cute but often had naughty names; Bear Balls, for instance, was a print of Teddy bears playing with beach balls. Early on, the company came out with an erotic print, which it sold under the counter. "My whole life was Lilly," Pulitzer says of that time. "I had Lilly prints on the walls, on the beds—you couldn't find yourself for Lilly. You were dressed in it, the house was dressed in it, the kids were dressed in it, anyone who walked in the door had a Lilly on."

Some periods were less Lilly than others. Pulitzer divorced her first husband in 1968, and her second husband, Enrique Rousseau, whom she married the following year, died in 1993. Rousseau was a lawyer from a patrician Cuban family who had been quite a playboy in Havana (he dated Esther Williams) and left Cuba when Castro took power. But Pulitzer doesn't dwell on bad times. "I've never been able to linger on an unhappy thought," she says. "I never stay mad at anyone. I don't have any of those normal feelings." This is, perhaps, the quintessential Lilly statement, the more so because it isn't true. "After Enrique died, Lilly went through a couple of years when she was bitchy and really, really difficult to be around," says Pulitzer's friend Susanna Kutts. "Finally, I said to her, How long is this going to go on, because you are just impossible. She said, Yeah, I know."

Pulitzer is unusual in choosing to live in Palm Beach year-round. The island is still very much a seasonal resort. "The season," which begins after Thanksgiving and ends around Easter, is the time when all the formal charity balls and less formal carousing for which Palm Beach is known take place. It is the winter that generates the infamous stories, like the one about the widow who had her husband's body embalmed and stored for nearly six weeks so that she could enjoy the season without worrying about his funeral.

After the season is over, the winter residents leave for their summer homes, and the population of the island drops from about twenty-five thousand to ten thousand. Houses are locked, their windows sealed up with sheets of metal. Pulitzer loves the island in the off-season. "In June," she says, "the turtles come up on the beach and drop their eggs with tears running down their faces. All kinds of good things go on in the summer." When she has people over for dinner in July, there is a huddled, intimate feeling about the evening, as though her friends there by her pool, under her banana trees, were the last people left on earth, and in the strange silence their voices could be heard all the way to The Breakers.

On one of these evenings, Pulitzer sat around after dinner with Jerry Beebe and Susanna Kutts. Beebe is forty-nine and holds forth with the theatrical, bon-vivant tones of a foil in a Noël Coward play. When he laughs, you hear all the "H"s. Kutts works in the P.R. department of the Palm Beach Saks Fifth Avenue and is about the same age as Beebe. She manages to be entertainingly talkative and at the same time elegant in a way that suggests reticence. Pulitzer and Kutts were in a nostalgic mood.

"And Pepito—Enrique's brother!" Kutts was saying. "Oh, my God, those stories about Hollywood he used to tell!" Kutts put on a Cuban accent, and held out her thumb and index finger about an inch apart. "Clark Gable: *like an olive.*"

"Richard Burton was always trying to get into Pepito's zipper," Pulitzer said. "There was lots going on in the old days."

"Remember that time Pepito and Enrique were in some hotel-room party in Havana with Errol Flynn? They thought the police were coming and threw their cocaine out the window, and afterward they all went outside, formed a human chain, and walked across the grass trying to find it. So many stories! Ernest Hemingway blowing a door off its hinges with a shotgun . . ."

"More! I want more!" Beebe cried.

"I used to come down here for Enrique's birthdays," Kutts told him. "Lilly used to throw big theme parties. One year, it was Fantasy Under the Sea. We had a huge mermaid on the buffet, and shells and coral everywhere, and we rented a shipwreck."

"Everyone had their underwater costumes," Pulitzer said.

"Lilly came as a lily pad. She had a big frog on her head. She said to me, I have something for you to wear, and she held up two little shells this big with a piece of string between them."

Pulitzer smiled at Kutts affectionately. "Oh, what a good time we had," she said.

As the evening neared its end, the mood drifted. The stories of Pulitzer's life seemed to lead her, as the life itself had led her, back into herself. Nostalgia tugged, tugged again, weakened, and gave way to the greater lure of solitude.

Kutts stood up to go. "I'm off," she said.

"Oh, I'm so glad," Pulitzer said. "It's bedtime, for Chrissake."

She padded through the house to the front door to see everybody off. Then she turned around to go back inside. As she shut the door behind her, the noise of the cars leaving died away. Soon, the evening's voices would stop ringing in her ears, and in Lilly Pulitzer's house only colors would remain. ♦

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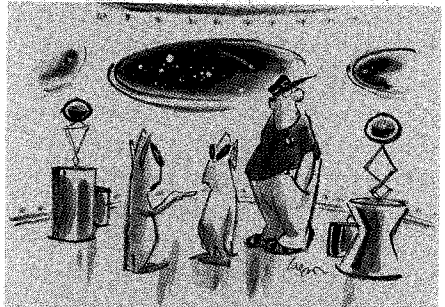

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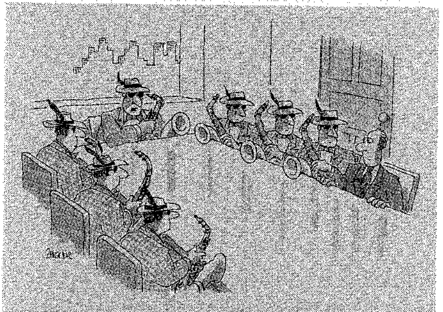

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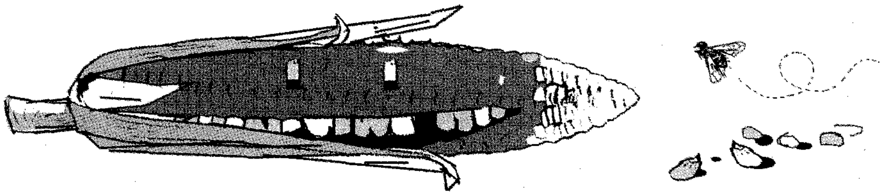

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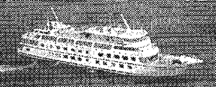

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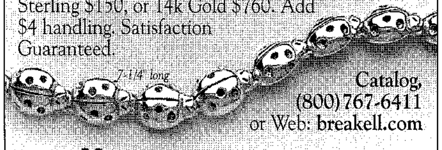

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PERSONAL HISTORY

THE HOT DARK

Mother, Daddy, and other summer worries.

BY MARY KARR

The summer of 1966 in Leechfield, Texas, was the first of many vastly vacant summers in that stalled and humid place. I was eleven, and fell into reading as into a deep well where no voice could reach me. I read the "Tarzan" books by Edgar Rice Burroughs and fancied myself running away to Africa to find just such an ape-man to swing me from vine to vine. I used to recite a poem about a goat-footed balloon man, and another about somebody stealing somebody else's plums and saying he was sorry but not really meaning it. I read "To Kill a Mockingbird" three times in one week, till the binding came unglued and had to be masking-taped back on. In the second or third grade, I'd seen the movie, and had always superimposed my own face over that of the puckish Scout, while picturing the chiselled young Gregory Peck for my boyfriend.

The house was empty. When Daddy wasn't pulling shift work at the refinery, he was trying to cadge some sleep, or else was off on his mysterious "rounds." At thirteen, my sister Lecia filled out a 36-C cup and was dating a variety of football stars. When she climbed the bleachers with legs a yard long in cut-off jeans, her blond flip sprayed into a form no wind could alter, high-school boys stood up by the row. And Mother was at college studying for her teaching certificate in fine arts (she was a painter)—a real oddity back then. But she wanted a higher standard of life than the local average and feared destitution at every turn. Her college work seemed to me like yet another escape from the banality of time at home with us.

Mother had a history of hasty marriages and equally hasty dissolutions. Pretty much if you pissed her off good, you could expect to hear her tires tearing out the driveway and then, within days, the knuckles of a process server rapping on your door with divorce papers. She'd ultimately rack up seven marriages in all, but, at the time, we'd witnessed only the two to my daddy—with the short, nearly negligible blip of my stepfather. (He'd appeared after my grandmother's death, after Mother had been briefly carted off to the hospital for—among other things—the vast quantities of vodka she'd managed to guzzle.)

The house that summer held me in a kind of misty nether time. The air-conditioner hummed. The refrigerator kicked on and lapsed off. I waited a lot, though for what I don't know. Nothing whatsoever seemed to be approaching from any direction. After I watched "The Song of Bernadette" on TV, I drew a picture of Jesus in my glitter-spackled book. For a while, I prayed ardently on my knees by my bedside—sometimes for titties or for John Cleary to ask me to the couples skate, but mostly for a best friend.

Only one girl showed the appropriate outlaw tendencies, a girl I will refer to as Clarice Fontenot. (I've had to change some names.) The only obstacle to our spending every conceivable second together that summer was her Cajun daddy's tight rein on her, which consisted of innumerable chores and capricious rules.

The Fontenots lived on the corner in a celery-green house that seemed to bulge at its seams with her wild-ass brothers. They all slicked back their hair on the sides and walked with a sexy, loose-hipped slouch. Clarice's role seemed to be serving their needs. While they ran the roads, she scrubbed and hung laundry and babysat a variety of black-eyed cousins whose faces (like hers) were spattered with freckles as if flicked from a paintbrush.

Doubtless her daddy meant this all as some kind of protection. Plenty of girls "got in trouble," and there were countless low-life characters circling nearby to pluck any unwatched female into libidinal activity in some hot rod or pickup truck. Clarice bridled against her daddy's limits but never actually broke the rules. She laughed in a foghornlike blast that drew stares in public. She could belch on command loud enough to cause old ladies in restaurants to ask to change tables. I never mastered this. But, thanks to her, I can whistle with my fingers, execute a diving-board flip, turn a cartwheel, tie a slipknot, and make my eyeballs shiver like a mesmerist. Other people worried what would become of Clarice if she didn't calm down. For me this wasn't the issue. What Clarice had was the absolute power of someone who fundamentally didn't give a damn (other than toeing her father's line, which she seemed to do breezily enough).

The author, aged fifteen, in her home town. "I first declared my love at six, writing 'I Love John Cleary' on the back of my T-shirt."

My first memory of her actually came long before that summer, when a cold sun was sliding down a gray fall sky and some older boys were playing tackle football in the field we took charge of every weekend. In a few years, they'd be called to Southeast Asia, and their locations would be tracked with red, white, and blue pushpins on wall maps in nearly every kitchen. That afternoon they were quick as young deer. They leaped and dodged and dove and collided in midair.

At some moment, Clarice figured out how to shinny up the goalpost, a feat none of us had mastered. Clarice wrapped herself round the pole, and her limbs turned to rubber. She'd kicked off her Keds, so her bare feet had purchase on the cold metal. She then scooted up half a foot at a time—hauling herself by her hands, then squeaking her feet up afterward. She was as weightless as an imp, and fast.

At the top of the pole, she rose balletic, back arched like a trapeze artist, and flung one hand up: "*Ta-da!*" she said, as if she were sheathed in a crimson-spangled bathing suit with fish-net hose and velvet ballet slippers. We cheered and clapped, moved back to the ten-yard line to take her in better. Then Clarice did something wholly unexpected.

She stuck her thumbs in the gathered waistband of her corduroy pants with the cowgirl lassos stitched around the pockets and yanked them down along with her underpants. She then bent over and waggled her butt. Screams of laughter. John Cleary fell over and rolled on the ground, pointing up and laughing. Then, just as we were getting used to the idea of her butt, she wheeled around and showed us her yin-yang, a dark notch in her hairless pudenda. Our howls took on a hyena-like timbre. And then, across the ditch, which marked the realm of adult civilization, appeared the fast-moving figure of Mrs. Carter. She was holding a spatula, with which she intended to blister our asses, Clarice's most specifically.

But Mrs. Carter, being a grownup, didn't want to funk up her shoes with mud, and she tiptoed around all hesitant before leaping across the ditch. In that interval Clarice slithered down the yellow pole and tore off in a streak, and the rest of us fled like wild dogs.

Mother was odd, but she was also beautiful, which had seemed an upside deal till my own form went starkly angular and my skin started blotching up. I remember running to her vanity table with my first pimple. Surely I'd had a few before. But this one was smack in the center of my forehead. Mr. O'Malley, the swimming-pool manager who'd one day have the impossible job of teaching me algebra, had pointed this one out. Loudly. "That where the Indian shot you?" he'd said, smirking down with the sunburned face of the ex-jock he was. Every kid lined up for the high board had doubtless heard him.

Mother was creaming makeup from her face when I showed up with it. Regarding O'Malley's comment, she said, "He's an asshole. You can't even see it with your bangs, and it looks much better than yesterday." The silvery cream being patted along her jawline was glossy as meringue.

"This was here yesterday?" I said. My jaw unhinged. Yesterday I'd had a horse fight at the pool against none other than John Cleary, and at one point, toward the end of the match, John had actually reached around to grab my hair from behind. My bangs had fallen aside then, so this massive boil in the center of my forehead must have been right in John Cleary's face. He probably saw my pulse in it.

I had first declared my love for John at six: I walked the road in front of his house with "I Love John Cleary" in black Magic Marker on the back of my T-shirt. My burgeoning ardor for John made me hypervigilant of all my body's maladies. One thing I definitely now needed was a bra, not least because it might encourage my chest to grow some titties. In Sigona's drygoods store, there was a terraced altar of Playtex bras I'd been sneaking looks at. But I had to ask Daddy for the money. And he, of course, had to say what for. When I told him, his face broke into a grin. "Baby," he said, "you want a bra, hell, I'll buy you a little bra!" We were shelling pecans at the time, and I had to use both hands to squeeze the nutcracker, which only smushed the pecan and sent shards flying sideways into the rug.

"I don't just want a bra, goddam it, Daddy."

"Lemme do it, Pokey," he said, and took the nutcracker from my hands. After a quick crunch, the husk fell into the bowl in large, neat pieces.

"What're you angling for, then, Pokey?" he asked.

What I wanted formed in my head for a good instant before I said it. "I want titties, goddam it, Daddy."

His eyes widened slowly at what I'd dared to say. "You want titties?" He threw back his head and hooted with laughter.

It was the next summer that Mother went missing.

Maybe her disappearing had to do with the fight she woke me up having with Daddy the weekend before. They'd gone at it full bore. I'd eased out of bed all smoky-headed and tiptoed into the dining room, clinging to the shadow of the bookcase.

Mother had been making some point, when she suddenly cut off her sentence as if she'd thought better of it. "Fuck you," she finally said. For extra measure, she shot Daddy the finger with both hands from down low, about hip level.

Daddy levelled his stare at her. "You know, in the state of Texas 'Fuck you' is interchangeable with 'Please hit me.' "

She jutted her jaw out. "Go ahead, then, Pete! Just hit me, you ignorant sonofabitch." But Daddy was picking up his truck keys, saying she wasn't worth it.

When I slid back under the covers next to my sister, I could hear his truck tires rolling out on gravel. "You awake this whole time?" I asked Lecia.

"Who could sleep? Jesus. World War Three," she said. We heard Mother slam the bedroom door.

"You ever worry she's gonna start drinking again?" I said.

In the distance, the sound of Daddy's truck engine wound down to nothing. In the back bedroom, Mother put on Mozart's Requiem. "Great," Lecia said. "Dead-man music. Lullaby and good goddam night."

We lay listening to the weaving, angelic chorus till it gave way to this deep-throated war-march sound—the hounds of Hell rising up to chase Mr. Mozart's ass to the grave.

"Where does Daddy go?" I asked after a while. "I mean, there's nowhere to go this late. The package store's closed. The American Legion's closed. You can't even get a tank of gas."

"Who knows?" Lecia said.

"Mother must," I said.

"Mother doesn't know shit," Lecia said with certainty.

Daddy was so far off in those days that even when he was there he was gone. In every room I occupied, he was just passing through. One night, when he hadn't come home, I decided to wait up for him and fetched a pillow and a quilt to wrap around me. No sooner did my cheek settle into that softness than sleep came. In the next instant, I felt Daddy scooping me up into his arms.

"You smell like Tennessee whiskey," I said. "Where you been?"

He said, "Just making rounds." Cradled against his chest, I felt the cold of his shirt snaps on my cheek. The whole house was dark. Our reflections moved across glistening windowpanes. I asked what time it was, and he said time for my narrow ass to get on to bed. "They's school tomorrow." I rolled out of his arms onto the covers with a plop like a meal sack. "You getting long, Pokey," he said. And when I asked him when I'd get too old for him to carry he said not as long as he could walk.

Only a week had passed since then, and here I was at the same back door, staring out into the same dark after Mother's absence, instead of his.

The Siamese cat shoved her chin against my ankle. I banged the aluminum screen door open so she could snake out. The noise must've jolted Daddy up, for I heard from down the narrow hall the creaking of the bed where he slept. "That you, Joe?" he said, by which he meant Mother. There was a wire of joy in his voice that nobody but Mother could get from him. After I said it was just me, he stayed quiet for a minute. "Get on back to bed, Pokey," he finally said. "She'll roll in directly."

I came to stand in his room. On the white pillow, his black hair was a crow's wing. A pair of headlights swam slowly past the windows. I made out his beaked profile, like the calm, farsighted Indian on old nickels. There was no crisis so dire that Daddy couldn't sleep through it, particularly if he'd pulled two nights of double overtime at the refinery, as he just had.

"What if she's dead?" I said.

"She'll stay dead," he said. "She'll still be dead come morning." He folded

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his hands on his chest like a corpse himself. "She's all right."

I wasn't so sure. Her bedside table was scarred by the vodka-filled tumblers that had left circles in the paint like moons in various stages of eclipse. From inside one came a glint, a dime, I figured, and I picked it up. But it turned out to be a ring, the platinum star sapphire Daddy had presented to Mother in a velvet box at Christmas. Daddy had paid a month's salary for it. It did not augur well that Mother would slip off that ring. I didn't want Daddy to know and so hid it under an ashtray.

About 3 A.M., Lecia came up with the idea of the two of us driving around to search for Mother. At fourteen, she was will incarnate. If I worshipped anything at that time, it was her canny intelligence. She poached Daddy's truck keys from the nail by the refrigerator, then we tiptoed barefoot to our bedroom, where we unhooked the screen and slipped out.

In the dim garage, the truck's grillework looked like bared fangs. I'd toted a pillowcase with two encyclopedia volumes and "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare" to wedge at the small of Lecia's back so she could inch closer to the floor pedals. Daddy was a demon on detail, and he might notice the seat hiked to the wrong notch. Since he also kept maniacally close track of the odometer, I'd upended a screwdriver in my back pocket for opening the glass over the dashboard and jacking the numbers back.

A low fog covered the road. Our headlights dipped into it as we lurched along from gear to gear.

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"Not the smoothest ride I ever had," I said.

"Then get out and walk," Lecia said.

The package store was long since closed, but in its parking lot sat a squat, pumpkin-shaped vehicle with its amber parking lights on and a pair of sockless feet in loafers jutting out the back window. It was Adam Phaelen's car. We crunched up beside it on the oyster-shell gravel.

He reared up blinking, hands raised like we were the law. I hopped out and ran over to find his pale-blue shirt unbuttoned and a narrow patch of curly hair on his otherwise smooth brown chest. Adam Phaelen was my Elvis. He had china-blue eyes that crinkled up in a know-something-about-you-that-ain't-public grin. He squinted at me and lowered his hands, then paused to look back at Lecia behind the wheel of Daddy's chugging truck.

"What y'all doing out this late, squirt?" he said. As I told him, he fished a broken Kool from the green-and-white pack in his breast pocket. "Last damn one, too," he said. "Y'all don't smoke, do you?" I shook my head and halfway figured to start, on the off chance that Adam Phaelen ever again required from me a Kool cigarette. He hadn't seen Mother, of course. He'd been playing poker with some old boys for nearabouts two days and had a dim memory of heading out for more smokes. He leaned over the front seat, then wondered aloud what fucking asshole made off with his keys. "Sorry, baby," he said, and lay back down.

Back in the truck, I felt my body still vaguely luminous from its brief amble into Adam's vicinity. Lecia steered us to the highway that led to Mother's art class. The street lights chopped up the night in a regular staccato, with her face flickering through the bright patches.

"You think Adam Phaelen's cute?" I said.

"Like you read about," she said with just half her attention. "Cute isn't the word."

I was thinking about his full lips when I said, "Would you give it up for Adam Phaelen?"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. Give it up. For Adam Phaelen."

"Don't be ignorant," she said. I looked at her soft profile in the dashboard light.

"Is that a yes or a no?"

"It's a don't be ignorant. Jesus. Adam Phaelen's twenty-one years old."

"You want a guy with experience," I said. "Otherwise, they hurt you."

"They hurt you anyways," Lecia said. "The first time, anyway. Experience or no."

Many nights, I'd listened through the heating vents to Lecia and Nickie Babin discussing the mysteries of being deflowered. That's how they talked about it. Something you owned was stolen, something of worth ruined. You never could get it back. And your whole market value as a female unit took a subsequent plunge.

"I got news for you," Lecia finally said. "Adam Phaelen wouldn't fuck you with somebody else's dick." Then she asked, "What are you talking like this for?"

"Just wondering," I said.

"Well, quit it," Lecia said. "That's all we need. You giving it up."

"I was actually wondering about you giving it up," I said.

"Well, I'm not giving it up. Not to Adam Phaelen or anybody, anyhow. Jesus. Where do you get this shit?"

We drove in silence after that. At no time along the roadside did Mother's yellow station wagon appear. When we reached the college parking lot, it was bereft of cars.

In the morning, I wandered from bed all crusty-eyed to find Mother sitting placidly at the table over a sketch pad, a charcoal stick in her hand and a bruise the size of a serving spoon on her left cheekbone. Daddy shuffled around the kitchen fixing his mess kit for work while Mother told Lecia and me a truncated version of the night before—how a man on a through-way turnaround had attacked and abducted her in the car. This was clearly the same version she'd told Daddy. I never quite understood why he heard certain stories in only their abridged form while we got expanded versions. Soon as his truck engine revved up, Mother reached for her smokes and it all poured out.

"He just popped up out of the ditch," she said. She'd been idling on the turnaround when her car door was yanked open, and he shoved her down. He put his fat knee in her middle, then socked her hard in the face. Above her cheekbone was a small moon-shaped cut that Mother claimed matched the horseshoe ring he wore. Then the guy tore open her flower-print blouse. She escaped when he pulled over to a package store for alcohol.

All this was near impossible to picture, and Mother's cool, indifferent tone didn't add to the reality of it. She was flat-eyed as a reptile. The whole deal came out with no more feeling than the average book report.

After the fireworks one Fourth of July, Clarice and I hooked up with John Cleary and two of his pals. We ended up standing in the road, swatting mosquitoes, not sure where else to go. All around, you could hear sharp pops like gunfire. Kids were hollering, and Huey Ladette's mama called him in because, goddam it, it was late, and she was gonna tear him a new asshole. Somehow we got to my garage, and I found the key to Mother's padlocked painting studio. Something was about to start, and we stood on the brink of it. Outside, a zillion crickets had gone into chirrup, chirrup, each in a different soprano voice. After my eyes got used to the dark, I made out John Cleary's crewcut.

Somebody came up with an idea for a kissing game, which basically meant Clarice and me each kissed a boy while one of them sat out and waited. If I had my druthers, Wally Ray Hawks would just go home and let me kiss John Cleary while Clarice kissed Bobbie.

The first boy I kissed was Bobbie, who held my elbows as if we were about to spin toplike through the dark. His lips were chapped dry as parchment and sweet. Then somebody said "Switch," and Wally Ray Hawks was on me. His lips were blubbery and wet. Plus once he got me arched back a good ways I could feel what must have been his dick hard as a crescent wrench poking my leg. The raw fact of it grossed me out, and this whole scene started to feel all blunt and greasy.

Then Bobbie said "Switch," and John Cleary drew me to him, and there was such a surge inside me I couldn't locate where it bubbled up from. I held my breath, afraid of messing up, while the corn dog I had eaten earlier flashed through my head, and I fought the urge to dash out, up the back step and into the bathroom to brush my teeth.

There's a TV commercial for some thick green shampoo that they drop a pearl in to show how rich it is, the pearl falling through this heavy green goop. All the cut grass in the world gets mashed into a bottle of this stuff. And that's what John Cleary smelled like. We moved into that slow-falling, underwater shampoo time. John did not hold my elbows like he was scared to get too close. He made a cage of his arms that I stepped right into, tilted his head, and said, with a breath like Juicy Fruit, "Is this O.K.?" Before I could say yes, he was breathing the Juicy Fruit right into my mouth, and his lips came closer until their softness matched up with mine. I pressed my hands flat against his chest, for half of me was afraid I'd fall entirely into him. Through the shirt cotton, I felt John's own strong heart. His hands trembled on my back, and I tried to draw him out of that trembling with my own tongue, till it was like we were drinking from each other.

Outside there was the bump of a screen door. I heard it latch back careful the way Daddy would do, and then there was the crunch of gravel, which set us all in a panic. Everybody reared back from kissing and started mouthing stuff I couldn't make out. Clarice had her knees squinched together like she had to pee. She flapped her hands like a bird fighting its way out of a nosedive. Daddy was crunching barefoot down the gravel path alongside the garage, closer and closer, until the studio door ached on its old hinges.

I thought of explicit threats he'd made about using his straight razor to slice up anybody who ever messed with Lecia or me. I thought this qualified as messing. He wouldn't actually use a razor on these boys, of course, or lay a hand on me or Clarice, but they might well catch an ass-whipping, which would be way better than the waterfall of shame I felt at the prospect of his knowing I'd been standing around in the dark letting boys put their tongues in my mouth.

In the hot dark, John Cleary's eyes were blue as struck matches. Daddy was in the garage now, easing the door back flush to the frame. When I heard him talking, at first I thought the talk was aimed at us. I took his sugary tone for a kind of sideways menace. "Poor old fella," he said. Then the black tomcat Daddy thought of as his yowled like he'd been picked up in the middle. That was when I knew we were safe. Daddy was not heading in here at all; he was going to sneak a drink.

We stood like statues in freeze tag. "Don't nobody love old Roy like he has coming," Daddy was saying. Clarice tried to stuff down her giggles. Wally Ray was waving his arms and miming "Sh-h-h"; John drew an invisible hankie out of his breast pocket and mopped his forehead.

"Works hard all day being a cat," Daddy said. "I know it. Nobody even rubs old Roy's chin." Daddy heaved open his truck door. The whiskey bottle clinked against the seat adjuster as he drew it out.

Nobody's folks drank like mine. John Cleary's daddy had had the same case of Lone Star in the garage for so long that spiders had nested all over it. Knowledge of that difference in my family made me suddenly alone in the room. An instant before, I had been in John's arms, embraced in more warmth than I could recall. Now Daddy's drinking had carved me away. He was sucking down whiskey and talking to a cat, saying, "Just tell old Pete about it." And maybe the cat did tell him. After a long time, Daddy said, "Dadgum 'em all to hell."

Then the door opened and his steps crunched away.

We stepped outside and found a night that had grown exponentially larger. We were small under the sky's dome. There was mist at our ankles, and the moon was low. I still felt quivery as a rabbit from where John Cleary had held me. I could barely look at him because I knew he possessed that soft mouth that matched up with mine so right. How could you know such a thing about a person and not lean into it? Bobbie finally said, "Old Pete Karr's tough as a boot."

John Cleary said, "I wouldn't wanna tangle with him."

Wally Ray made the sign of the cross. "We damn near died back there," he said. This puffed me up a little, that Daddy was so formidable in everybody's mind. Clarice wasn't saying diddly. Like me, she was doubtless thinking of all that softness these otherwise scabby-looking boys embodied.

Out of nowhere, Bobbie said to Wally Ray and John, "Let's go back to my house and make Jiffy Pop and watch TV." Then they were slapping away, no goodbye, no see you later. They practically vaporized before us.

When they were far enough away, Clarice asked if I'd felt myself getting hot back there. "And I don't mean temperature."

I said, "Hell, yes."

We stood for a second, unable to say more about it or to let the feeling go. If I closed my eyes, I could taste John Cleary's Juicy Fruit and feel the unexploded weight of him breathing on me.

Mother harped all the time on how sex and even touching yourself was as normal as could be. Her only worry was that I'd get what she called hot pants and get knocked up.

I asked Clarice if she wanted to go over to Bobbie's house and ask to share their Jiffy Pop. As excuses go, she said, that's really pitiful sounding. To show up there would be asking for it. Since the boys probably got blue balls from kissing us, no telling what they'd do. Her brothers had explained to her that unchannelled sperm made your balls swell and somehow backed up into your brain. "They don't think straight with blue balls," Clarice said.

Because John Cleary's kisses had plugged my body into some unspecified socket still humming on high, I asked Clarice what girls get to have that even approximates blue balls.

"Diddly-shit, that's what," Clarice said. Or else you got A Reputation. If you let boys suck hickeys on your neck or if you did the shimmy at the skating rink so your boobs slapped back and forth like Marilyn Fruget, then you got guys standing around lagging pennies off a wall behind the raceway, talking about how they finger-fucked you and your yin-yang made their hands smell like tuna fish. Clarice was going to high school year after next and had big plans for improving her social standing. She said a rosary every night to grow titties, and when that crop finally came in the last thing she wanted was A Reputation. Nor, she warned me, did I want one when I started junior high in the fall.

I told her that tonight I wasn't so sure.

The next time Mother chose to vanish, Daddy was off bass fishing. No matter how often she did this, you never got used to it.

Lecia came home from her date, and, after she made a cursory drive past every gin mill or liquor store, the two of us sat out under the dripping chinaberry in webbed lounge chairs for the better part of the night. We were waiting for the phone to ring or to hear Mother's car rumble up. Because my mind had looped through the gamut of minor disasters that might befall her, and left only tragedies that involved swirling police lights, we bickered.

The subject was: whose misbehavior ran Mother off this time? Lecia claimed that my sullen misery would have driven Jesus Christ to drink soapy water. I maintained that Lecia's illiterate boyfriend had worried Mother about her prospects as a grandmother—specifically, whether such children might be born with fully opposable thumbs or not. Every now and then a car's rushing silenced us, then slid away, dragging that silence behind it.

The next morning at dawn the phone rang, and Lecia snapped it up mid-ring. Mother was at the Holiday Inn with a hangover so severe she couldn't drive. Could Lecia pick her up in Daddy's truck? I don't know if Mother specifically suggested that I be left behind or if Lecia decided it, but when the truck left without me I suddenly felt like I was the kid looking up at the tree-house rope as it's drawn inside a plywood door.

Eventually, the truck returned, huffing into the garage, Lecia running around to heave open Mother's door, which was rusty enough to give a sea-monster sort of moan. Then Mother spilled out, weak-legged as a colt.

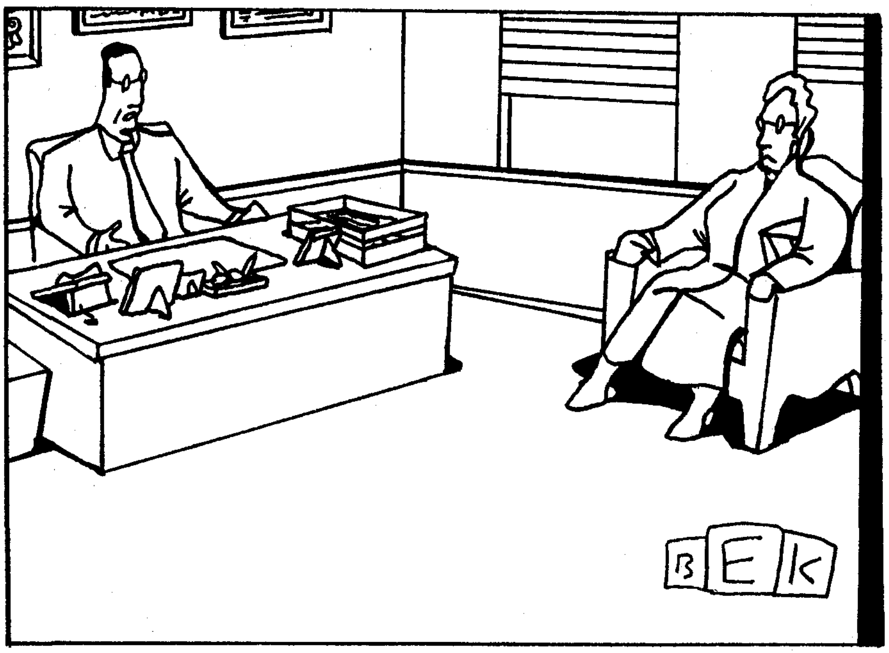
Mother lay in bed, weeping silently. Every now and then, some wave inside her surged up, and she escalated to hacking sobs. Meanwhile, Lecia bustled around with the crisp certainty of a field nurse. A dish towel of ice for Mother's forehead. A glass of tepid ginger ale for her stomach. A pillowcase warm from the dryer. Such gifts never occurred to me. I watched Lecia minister till Mother finally slept, coiled on her side on that massive mattress like a fossil you'd found hardened in a dry riverbed.

Lecia said little—only that the hotel room had been a mess. Mother had thrown up down the hall and on the bathroom floor and, later, along the side of the car. She'd lost her credit card somewhere, and Lecia had to pay for the room with her own money plus change she scrounged from the bottom of Mother's purse and the floor of her car.

It was late afternoon when Mother's eyes opened. Her hands trembled for a cigarette that I helped her light. She said yes to Lecia's offer of chicken soup. Then she bolted to the bathroom. Lecia tested the knob to find it locked. Only after a long silence did Mother answer, claiming to have Daddy's Colt .45, with which she planned to kill herself.

And that was the tableau when the sun fell: Lecia in the hall speaking to a closed door in tones reasonable and plaintive. She cajoled Mother while I stood in a shushed quiet. I scribbled notes to my sister: Let's call the law! Or: Let's go around the house and bust out the window! Lecia waved these away. Every now and then the conversation stalled. Then the stillness emanating from the locked door became huge.

By the time the moon was halfway up the sky, the injustice of the whole situation suddenly struck me. Before I knew it, I was shouting at the locked door where Lecia stood as if to block my words: "Go on and do it, goddam it. I'm sick of waiting. Just shoot yourself then, if you've got the guts."



"I recommend an aggressive form of throwing money at me."

Lecia tried to shush me and waved me back. Finally, she shoved me away, saying, "Just go somewhere else if you can't handle it." I ran to my room and flung myself down on the bed, pulled the pillow over my humming head, and waited for the gunshot that didn't come and didn't come.

Just before dawn, I heard a pinging, chipping noise—stone against stone, maybe, or metal against stone. It was rhythmic, too slow to sound purposeful, but loud enough to wake me through the low drone of the air-conditioner.

On the back porch, I found Lecia, sitting on the top step with her back to me. She was wearing somebody's oversized football jersey and was bent so far forward that her chin rested on her knee.

I asked, "What's this dog-shit racket out here?"

"Just jick-jacking around," Lecia said. I leaned over her shoulder and saw that she was holding a ball-peen hammer, knocking the edges off the brick steps with it.

"Daddy sees this, he's gonna tear you a new asshole."

Lecia found another sharp edge to start shearing off. The air was still. The fog in the yard muffled all sound except Lecia's sharp chink, chink, chink. In the washhouse, the dryer was tumbling.

I said, "You've gone stark staring nuts. He's gonna know you did this. And what good's it do? Just piss him off is all, after Mother getting all drunkedy-ass."

"I don't give a shit what he thinks," Lecia said.

Lecia looked at me full face for a minute. She must have rubbed her eyes in her sleep, for last night's mascara made dark rings around each one. She said, "These people don't have any sense, Mary. Hasn't that dawned on you? Not the sense God gave a goat."

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

Already it was hot. The Siamese rolled on the warm patio bricks.

Lecia was rankled. She said, "It hasn't even dawned on you yet, has it?" In that instant, my colossal sister looked so small—her brown body bent in on itself that way—I almost believed I could have gathered her whole in my arms like a puppy.

"You mean Mother and Daddy?" I finally said. In the chinaberry tree, a bird whistled a two-syllable tune that sounded like a question: "Bob White? Bob White?"

Lecia said, "Neither one of them has a lick of sense. Sooner you figure that out, the better off you'll be. I don't listen to shit from either one." ♦

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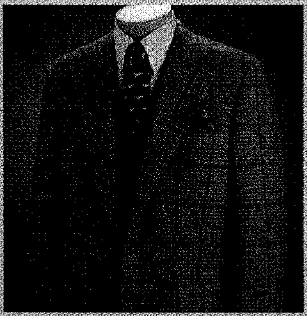

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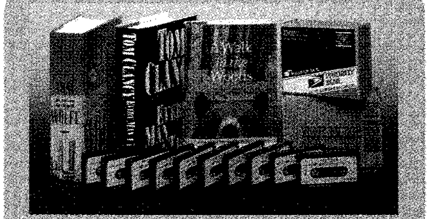

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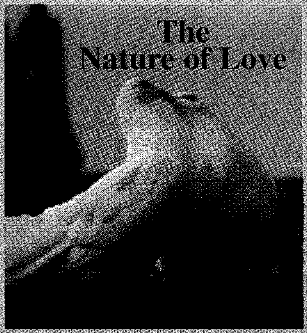

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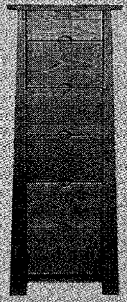

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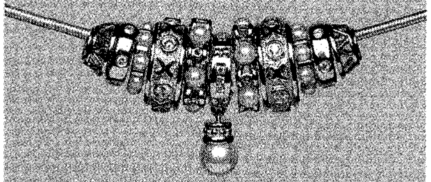

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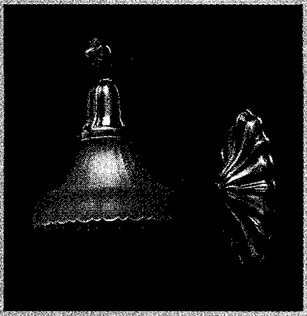

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000904

PROFILES

THE TENNIS ARTIST

People loved booing John McEnroe. Now he's the game's best ambassador.

BY CALVIN TOMKINS

The United States Davis Cup team's humiliating 5–0 loss to Spain in July, in the semifinals of the yearly competition, did not come as a surprise. Spain has three of the world's best clay-court players in Alex Corretja, Albert Costa, and Juan Carlos Ferrero, and the slow, red-clay surface that the Spaniards provided for the matches, in the pleasant northern seaside city of Santander, did not favor the mobility or confidence of an American team whose top players, Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi, had both pulled out at the last minute because of injuries. The Spaniards were so confident, and the Americans so diffident about their chances, that during the week preceding the matches the only real suspense came from the possibility that John McEnroe, the United States team's forty-one-year-old captain, would pick himself to play doubles.

The United States has not won the Davis Cup since 1995, and the doubles, sandwiched between the four singles matches, has been a big part of the problem. In his first year as the Davis Cup captain, McEnroe fielded a team that barely squeaked by Zimbabwe and the Czech Republic, losing the doubles in both series; reporters kept asking McEnroe, who is generally considered to be the finest doubles player of all time, why he didn't use himself, and he kept saying that he had not ruled out the possibility. This time, in Spain, he did put himself on the playing roster, and for nearly a week speculation about his playing in the doubles completely dominated international news coverage of the event. All this was fairly annoying to McEnroe, a private man whose public fame makes him a good deal more uncomfortable than you would expect.

He didn't play, as it turned out, and America lost the doubles as well as the four singles matches, and McEnroe, glum but relatively gracious in defeat, seemed disgusted mainly with himself. At the press conference after the doubles match, wearing a New York Yankees baseball cap and a warmup jacket zipped to the chin, he kept rubbing his face with both hands, like a man brushing away cobwebs. His comments were blunt. Alex Corretja had "played a really solid doubles match," and as for Juan Balcells, his partner, who is virtually unknown outside Spain, "even Balcells played reasonably well." He added, "He's got the greatest eighty-three-mile-an-hour serve in the history of tennis." But Todd Martin and Chris Woodruff played well, too, and nearly won—the match went to five sets. "I mean, we deserved better," McEnroe said. "They should have won."

McEnroe's decision not to play had been made two days before the matches started, in consultation with his teammates; the next morning, he had hopped in a taxi and gone off to visit the new Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, sixty miles away. "It would have been interesting, had I just been a little more prepared," he told me. "I felt like I could have shown them a couple of things. There's not a lot of players around who have the technique for doubles—all these bludgeoners. But I also played like crap recently, so who knows?" He held out his left hand—his racquet hand—to show me a nasty-looking blister that had formed around and underneath a callus in the middle of his palm. He also had a back problem, he said, from all the time he'd been spending lately, at the French Open and at Wimbledon, sitting in a booth

PHOTOGRAPH BY HARRY BENSON

The four-time U.S. Open champion with his wife, Patty Smyth, in Central Park.

and commenting on the matches for NBC, USA, and the BBC. "I'm falling apart," he said. "It's age, I guess."

My father once took me to see Bill Tilden play, at the Orange Lawn Tennis Club, in New Jersey. The already mythical champion was past his peak then, but he was still the game's dominant figure. I remember Tilden coming from behind in the third set, and my father, who was a big Tilden fan, bending over and saying to me, as the lean, saturnine figure in long white pants prepared to serve for the match, "Watch this." Four first serves, four aces.

A lot of players have held me in thrall since that baptism. The styles of Don Budge, Pancho Gonzalez, Lew Hoad, and Rod Laver are as firmly imprinted on my somewhat floppy memory disk as those of Jimmy Connors, Martina Navratilova, and Pete Sampras. For years, I was almost embarrassed to admit that the one I'd enjoyed watching the most was John McEnroe. How could anyone like McEnroe, that perennial sorehead, whose on-court tantrums and obscenity-laced philippics against line judges and umpires had earned him record-breaking fines and suspensions? It is generally agreed that McEnroe was a tennis genius—the most naturally gifted player who ever lived, according to Arthur Ashe and many others—and his record as an active player is pretty spectacular: seventy-seven singles titles, including three Wimbledon and four U.S. Open championships, balanced by seventy-seven doubles titles; a record fifty-nine wins (singles and doubles) in Davis Cup competition; the No. 1 ranking in the world in 1981, 1983, and 1984. A serve-and-volley player who depended on quick reactions, touch, and court sense rather than on brute power, he could dismantle an opponent's game with a variety of shots and angles that frequently brought audible gasps of surprise from onlookers. At its best, his tennis had a heady, Mozartean inventiveness that made your spine tingle.

As for the bad behavior—well, even that came to fascinate me. Repellent as it was to see him stand there and scream at an umpire, like a spoiled, red-faced child, there was something oddly authentic about it, a sense of towering outrage against injustice. He knew he couldn't win the argument or change the call. Some players felt he did it as a tactical ploy, to make them lose their concentration, but it was McEnroe's concentration that generally suffered, and, as he has pointed out, when you call an umpire "the pits of the world," which he did at Wimbledon in 1981, the man is not likely to rule in your favor on the next close call. The gentlemen's code in tennis was defunct by the time McEnroe hit the scene, of course, trampled to death by Ilie Nastase, Jimmy Connors, and other loutish performers. A tennis Code of Conduct, with penalties for infractions, was introduced in 1980, mainly to deal with Nastase, the Romanian eccentric whose stalling, arguing, and bizarre antics turned many of his matches into tiresome travesties. Connors excelled at sheer vulgarity, spewing obscenities and simulating masturbation with his racquet handle. While his behavior often provoked laughter, McEnroe's drew angry whistling and booing or else, on occasion, appalled silence. He was out of control, but the emotion was painfully genuine.

Today, eight years after McEnroe stopped playing regularly on the men's tour, his court rage is remembered more tolerantly. It's a running joke in ads and in commercials that air during television coverage of the major tournaments, for which McEnroe has become a widely admired commentator. He has set a new standard for colorful, candid, and informed television commentary in recent years, and a vast public has come to think of him as a good guy: generous in his appraisals of the players; full of insights about the unseen factors that influence the course of a match; humorously aware that tennis is a game—a marvellous and beautiful game, to be sure, requiring a level of skill, athleticism, endurance, and mental toughness that few other sports can match, but still a game—on whose outcome no empires rise or fall.

After trying his hand at other occupations—running his own art gallery, playing in his own rock band—McEnroe is now devoting most of his time to tennis again. Last year, soon after being inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, in Newport, Rhode Island, he was named captain of the United States Davis Cup team, a job he had made no secret of wanting for some time. In this era of big-money tennis, when not too many of the top players care to interrupt their schedules to play for team and country, McEnroe had more or less rescued Davis Cup competition from oblivion during his active playing years. He played in thirty ties (as the matches between national teams are called), and chalked up a record number of victories in the course of helping the United States win the Cup five times. The United States Tennis Association had balked at giving him the captain's job before, fearing that his temper might lead to international embarrassments, but Andre Agassi and Pete Sampras let it be known that they wanted him, and it is almost certainly because he got the job that both of them agreed (initially, at least) to join the U.S. team this year. So far there have been no embarrassing incidents. The McEnroe team's hair-raising comeback victories against Zimbabwe and the Czechs generated more public interest in the Cup—and a great deal more press attention—than there had been since he stopped playing, and the loss in July to Spain did nothing to dim McEnroe's somewhat starry-eyed belief that America's best players should put Davis Cup participation ahead of everything else.

In addition to his day jobs as Davis Cup captain and TV commentator, McEnroe is playing a lot of competitive tennis. For the past two years, he has dominated the senior men's professional tennis circuit, for players over thirty-five, which Jimmy Connors started in 1993 and developed into a successful international operation. McEnroe won ten of the twelve senior tournaments he entered last year, outclassing Connors, Bjorn Borg, Mats Wilander, Yannick Noah, and a dozen other former rivals. About a third of his current income, which is considerable, now comes from playing senior tournaments, some of which pay him six-figure guarantees just to show up. (The other two-thirds comes from his TV broadcasting and from commercial endorsements.)

Curious to see him in action again, I took my wife to Richmond, Virginia, in the spring, where we watched him in the Trigon Champions senior tournament. On the court against Mikael Pernfors, an efficient Swedish player in red tennis shoes, McEnroe looked just the way he used to: a fraction under six feet tall, with a spare, unimposing build and a cloth headband. There was some gray in his hair, which is getting thin on top, and a small silver earring in one ear. During the warmup, he moved smoothly and hit his forehands with a lot of pace. Since my wife had never seen him play, I could call her attention to his unorthodox left-handed style—especially the short, almost nonexistent backswing and minimal follow-through. He still doesn't bend his knees at the net. He stands straight up, and if the ball comes in low his racquet head drops down to meet it—just what every tennis pro tells you not to do. His serving motion is as strange as ever. He stands sideways to the net, bends way forward and down with both arms, and rises slowly; then the high toss, the scythelike sweep of the racquet, the quarter turn that pulls his whole body into the stroke.

He put away Pernfors in two quick sets. The umpire kept reversing the linesmen's calls, though, and several points had to be replayed, and by the third game of the match McEnroe was standing in mid-court, hands on hips, yelling at the umpire. Two games later, he told a heckler in the stands to "keep right on being an asshole up there," and he slammed his racquet against an advertising sign during a changeover. "He's intimidated everybody," my wife observed. "The umpire, the linesmen, the crowd, and Pernfors. He's completely in charge."

We had a late dinner with McEnroe that evening in the bar of the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond. He showed up right on time, in jeans and a black T-shirt and a red baseball cap, which, as I later found out, he wears to keep from being recognized. A minute or so after we sat down, though, a middle-aged guy with a few drinks under his belt came over and just stood there, staring at him. "How are ya?" he said. McEnroe was noncommittal, tense, neither rude nor friendly. After a minute or so, the guy said, "Well, I just wanted to say hello," and left. "What I hate is when they ask for my autograph," McEnroe said. "Not the kids—ten and under is different." McEnroe has six kids—something he manages to mention in almost any conversation—three by his first marriage, to the actress Tatum O'Neal, and two with his present wife, Patty Smyth, who also has a daughter from her previous marriage.

Once past the initial tensions, he relaxed and talked freely, almost volubly. He gestures and moves around a lot when he talks; his restless energy makes it difficult for him to sit still. McEnroe is known for saying what he thinks, as I had learned during a couple of earlier conversations with him—at one point, he'd told me that he didn't think much of my questions, but in spite of that I'd found myself liking him quite a lot. During dinner that night, he agreed that he was hitting the ball pretty well against Pernfors, and said that the Volkl graphite racquet he now uses helps to make his first serve faster than it was ten years ago—up to a hundred and fifteen miles an hour, as opposed to a hundred and ten or less. "It's faster," he said, "but not better, nor do I volley or move as well, so ultimately my serve isn't as effective. As Connie Hawkins said, the older you get, the better you used to be." I asked him how much of his on-court anger during the Pernfors match had been genuine and how much was entertainment. "It was both," he said, with a slight grin. "People relate to my getting pissed off on the court, so I feel an obligation. They want to see personalities, which is O.K. so long as you don't go over the line, as I used to do regularly, of course."

The first time McEnroe went over the line, he wasn't even pissed off. It happened at Wimbledon in 1977, the first year he played there, when he was eighteen. He had come over to play in the Wimbledon junior tournament, but first he entered the qualifying matches for the men's draw and won all of them, and then got all the way to the semifinals of the main event—the youngest qualifier ever to do so—where he lost to Jimmy Connors. In his quarterfinal match, against Phil Dent, disgusted at himself over losing the first-set tiebreaker, McEnroe put the head of his wooden Dunlop racquet under one sneaker and started to bend it, and for the first time in his life he heard boos from the crowd. Intrigued, he kicked his racquet toward the sideline, and heard more booing. "It didn't bother me," he remembers. "I thought it was funny." The London tabloids picked up on it the next day, though, and McEnroe, who had also questioned a couple of line calls, went from being a teen-age sensation to a "Superbrat," with headlines telling him to go home. The 1977 Wimbledon changed his life. He became the bad guy, and he also learned, with considerable surprise, how good his game really was. "I was the top junior in the world, but that didn't translate to me that I could get into the semis at Wimbledon," he told us. "I suddenly began to realize, Hey, these guys aren't as good as I thought, and I'm a whole lot better." A connection between bad behavior and great tennis may have entered his thinking around this time, although McEnroe didn't really start yelling at umpires for another year or so.

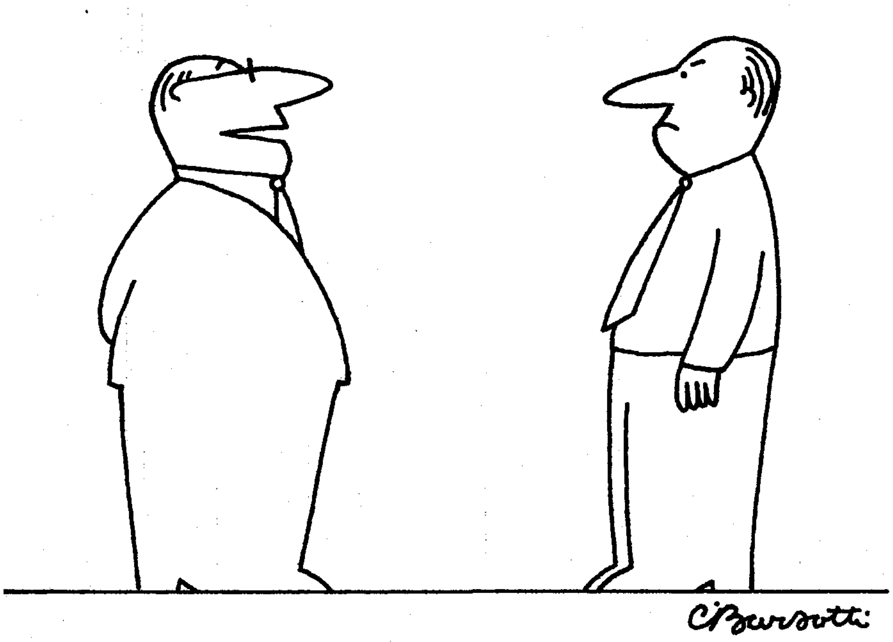
His behavior and his game deteriorated badly at this year's season-ending

"Let the healing begin!"

seniors tournament, the Masters, which took place in June on a court installed over the Wollman skating rink in Central Park. All the old demons came pouring out of him during his loss to Henri Leconte, a flashy French player who has been one of the few seniors to give him trouble during the past year. With his wife and four-year-old daughter in the stands, McEnroe challenged line calls, yelled obscenities at officials and spectators, threw his racquet four times, incurred two point penalties for code violations (one for using an obscenity, the other for "racquet abuse," the code's quaint term for giving it the heave-ho), and turned the home-town triumph he had wanted and expected into an ugly, painful debacle. Not a shred of entertainment about it this time—he was out of control again. Even so, he nearly won the match, surging back from 2–4 to take the second set, but his serve deserted him in the ten-point tiebreaker that the seniors play in lieu of a third set, and he went down, grim and furious, his expression leaving no doubt that for him, at that moment, tennis was not a game at all but a miserable, degrading ordeal. Nobody has said the man is without contradictions.

John Patrick McEnroe, Jr., was born in Wiesbaden, Germany, where his father was serving at a U.S. Air Force base. The Irish-Catholic McEnroes moved back to the States a few months after his birth, and John and the two brothers who came later, Mark and Patrick, grew up in the solidly middle-class suburb of Douglaston, Queens. His father, a lawyer who is now a partner at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, remembers that John was a bright, interesting child whose extraordinary hand-eye coördination showed up very early. "I was in the park, playing Wiffle ball with him when he was two or three years old. I'd pitch it to him, and he'd hit it over my head. An old lady came over, and said, 'Excuse me, is that a little boy, or a midget in disguise?' " When John was eight, his parents joined the country club in Douglaston, and John started taking tennis lessons there with Dan Dwyer, a high-school teacher and coach who taught tennis on the side. "About two weeks after he started the lessons, he played in a club tournament for kids twelve and under, and got to the semifinals, where he lost to a twelve-year-old," his father told me. "A couple of weeks later, there was another tournament. The same four kids made the semis, but John went on to win it. At the awards ceremony, Dwyer said that someday he would be playing at Forest Hills. I took up tennis that same year, and I used to boast that I could beat John until he was ten. He was a whippet, all over the court."

For years, the younger McEnroe preferred team sports to tennis. When he was eleven, though, he started playing in junior tennis tournaments, and his father enrolled him in the Port Washington Tennis Academy, on Long Island. The head pro there was Harry Hopman, a legendary figure who had trained most of the great Australian players of the nineteen-fifties and sixties. (A falling-out with the Australian tennis association had brought him to this country the year before.) Hopman immediately recognized and encouraged McEnroe's natural gifts, but it was another pro on the staff, Antonio Palafox, the former Davis Cup player from Mexico, who really developed his game. Palafox was a touch player. "John wanted to play like Tony because he understood that Tony was an artist," according to Mary Carillo, who lived three blocks from the McEnroes in Douglaston and grew up playing tennis with John. (Two years older than he was, she would become a tournament player and, later, a tennis analyst for CBS.) Palafox taught him how to take the ball on the rise—short backswing, short follow-through—and how to take full advantage of his quick hands and supple wrists. "You've got to remember that John was small for his age, always the shortest kid playing at the Douglaston club," Carillo told me. "Most boys, when they get bigger and start to develop muscles, want to hit the hell out of the ball, but that never occurred to John. He always understood that his feel and his awareness of the court were what were making him such a hell of a player."



"No, no, your job's not going out of the country to some foreign bastard. We're just firing you."

Palafox had a number of talented young players then, including Vitas Gerulaitis, a future Wimbledon and Australian Open champion, and Peter Fleming, who would become McEnroe's Davis Cup doubles partner, but McEnroe was far and away his most responsive student. "He wanted to learn new shots all the time, and every time I gave him one he would learn it in three tries," Palafox told me. "Other players would need three hundred, four hundred tries to get it right, but he learned fast."

Palafox worked with McEnroe all through his school years and became his coach when he turned pro. (He also coached McEnroe's younger brother Patrick, who had a moderately successful career on the pro circuit.) "John had the ability to change the pace on every shot, and that made it difficult for the other player to react," Palafox said. "When he

VOLCANO RIDE

After colliding with a cloudberg, the chopper
sinks through more, like feelings gone soft
around the edges, forming shapeless moist
masses and as easily dissolving, until underhead
we approach the ashen, lopsided cones,
the brimstone stench of steam, the mess of gods.
Headphones dip into the sliding plates
dragged over soft forces divided by stress,
some fracturing crust of indifference
through which the buried magma seeps.
Or have I got it all wrong again?
Does he mean instead that, once home,
after we're back, set down, driven off,
the sunset's backwash sloshing
in the rearview's little sac of sorrows,
the tremors will start again, the leakage?

—*J. D. McClatchy*

played Jimmy Connors, later, he would change the pace and Connors couldn't do anything, because his game was all power. John learned to hit a ball that looked so slow, but it would hit the ground and skid because he put his body into it. For a while, with him, every shot was a weapon."

The only part of his game that didn't come from Palafox was his serve. He developed that on his own, at the age of eighteen, when his back began giving him trouble. McEnroe started bending way over as a way of stretching his back muscles, and then he found that by turning his body more toward the sideline he could stretch more comfortably and at the same time disguise the spin and direction of his serve better. He won a lot of junior tournaments, and never misbehaved in any of them. A cocky, high-strung kid, intensely competitive and often furious with himself ("You stink!" he would yell, after a botched approach shot), he was even better at doubles than he was at singles. The first adult title he ever won was in a doubles tournament, the Men's Hardcourt Eastern Championships. His partner was Eugene Scott, a former top-ten player, now the publisher and editor-in-chief of *Tennis Week*. "John was fifteen then, and I was thirty-seven or thirty-eight," Scott recalls. "Everybody assumed we won because of my great wisdom and experience, but he saw angles on the court that I would never see. I look at the court as a rectangle. He saw it as something else—a parallelogram, maybe. He was always improvising, experimenting with angles. He had no fear of losing a point."

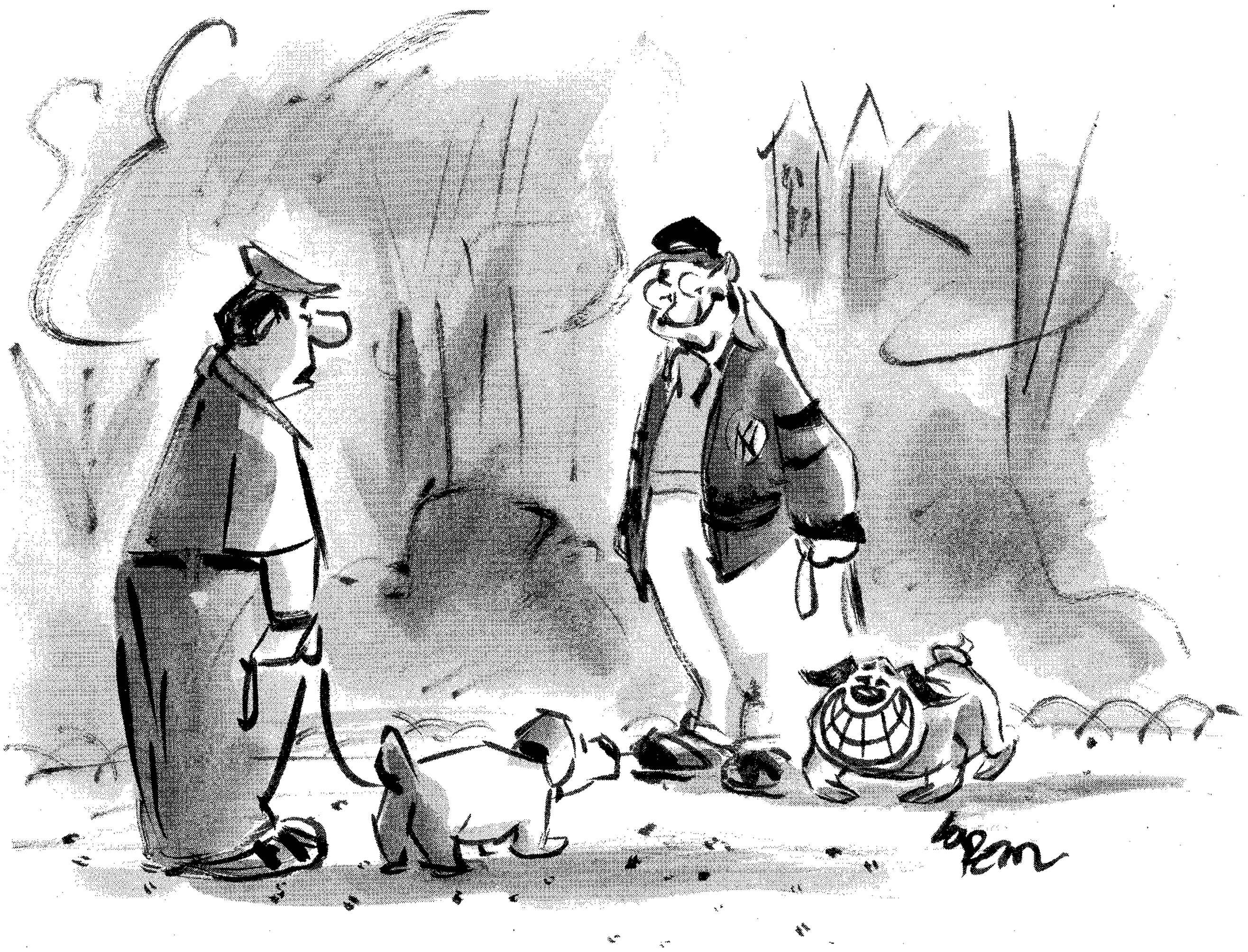
At the time, and for several years afterward, tennis was still only one of McEnroe's sports. At Trinity School in Manhattan, which he started attending at age fourteen (thirty minutes in on the train from Douglaston, then another twenty on the subway uptown), he was the left wing on the soccer team, and the high scorer in his league. (He also got good grades.) The watershed year was 1977, when he qualified for and got to the second round of the French Open, won the mixed doubles there with his pal Mary Carillo, and then waltzed to the men's semifinals at Wimbledon.

If he had turned pro before Wimbledon, he would have made something like forty thousand dollars. Instead, he came back and entered Stanford, a college where tennis is taken seriously. McEnroe perfected his new serve at Stanford, became a more aggressive serve-and-volleyer, played No. 1 on the championship Stanford team, and won the U. S. National Intercollegiate singles title, all in his freshman year. That was it for college. He turned pro in May, 1978. Although he fizzled in the first round at Wimbledon a month later, he reached the semifinals of the U.S. Open that fall, losing again to Connors in a close match, and he won four other tournaments in singles and seven in doubles. He also led the United States Davis Cup team to its first victory since 1972, winning both his singles matches in a 4–1 victory over Great Britain.

His rapid ascent through the rankings (by the end of 1978 he was No. 3 in the world, behind Bjorn Borg and Connors) seemed to have a reverse effect on his behavior. Umpires and linespeople had become enemies in his sight. "In his defense, the officiating then really was awful," Gene Scott said. "There was a famous picture of a woman sound asleep on the line at Wimbledon, with Clark Graebner looking at her. Some umpires didn't even know the rules." Bad calls seemed to drive McEnroe crazy. At post-match press conferences, he was sometimes contrite, berating himself for his outbursts, but more often he came across as a brash New York kid speaking his mind. Tennis, he believed, was still too damned élitist. Why should the crowd accept players and managers yelling at the umpire in baseball but not in tennis? His father, who was also his manager then, tried coming to one or two press conferences, thinking that might calm John down a little, but it didn't work. As McEnroe himself once admitted, "When I walk out there on court, I become a maniac."

His meltdowns usually came in the early rounds. He rarely acted up in a final, or in any match with Bjorn Borg. A tall, rangy Swede who never showed a flicker of emotion on court, Borg was his great rival, his antithesis, the anti-McEnroe. They played each other fourteen times, and broke even, seven matches apiece. In their most famous meeting, the 1980 Wimbledon final, which many people consider the most thrilling match ever played there, the clash of opposing styles and personalities was heightened by the impeccable sportsmanship on both sides. Borg, who had dominated Connors and won Wimbledon four years running, was the king of tennis, a superbly conditioned athlete who wore his opponents down with errorless shotmaking from the baseline. McEnroe was the rising prince, the mercurial, daring net-charger who had won his first U.S. Open the year before, beating Connors and then Vitas Gerulaitis in straight sets.

The 1980 final at Wimbledon went to five sets, after McEnroe, who had



"Really? I never heard of a Cheshire dog."

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seemed on the verge of defeat, rallied to force a fourth-set tiebreaker that took twenty minutes and produced an almost unbroken succession of phenomenal shots and incredible returns. I watched it on television, in the lounge of a tennis club in Vermont, along with twenty or so other weekend players, who forgot about lunch, their own games, and everything else. McEnroe faced down five match points against him and failed to convert on four set points before finally winning the tiebreaker by a score of 18–16. He then succumbed to Borg's superior endurance and unbreakable serving in the fifth set, 8–6. "Of all the matches in my career, that's the one that people come up to me and talk about the most," McEnroe has said. "Now, twenty years later, a lot of them don't even know I lost—it's the tiebreaker they remember! But that match elevated my status, made people think differently about me. No question, I can tell my kids that I'm a better person and became a better player eventually because of a match I didn't win." McEnroe beat Borg two months later, in the U.S. Open final, and he beat him again, at Wimbledon, in 1981, ending Borg's five-year mastery there and effectively sending him, at the age of twenty-five, into early retirement. Borg had not returned to Wimbledon until this past July, when he and McEnroe both appeared in the parade of sixty-five former Wimbledon greats which was one of the tournament's opening-week events. The Brits, as though making up for ancient antagonisms, cheered louder and longer for McEnroe than they did for anyone else.

"I was really shocked when Borg decided to retire," McEnroe told me this summer. "I thought there were many more matches to come, and it was something I really looked forward to. He was one of the few guys I never had a problem with, on or off the court. Jimmy and I butted heads, we never liked each other, but Bjorn accepted me—although he would sort of look at me with bemusement sometimes. Once, when we played in New Orleans—I think it was in 1979—I was going crazy during the match, and he motioned for me to come up to the net. I did, and he sort of put his arm around me and said, 'It's all right, John. It's O.K.' Just like that. That was a big moment for me."

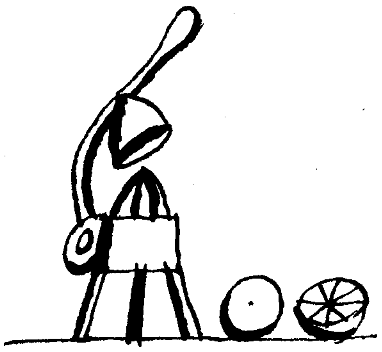
McEnroe got little satisfaction from his No. 1 ranking. "Being No. 2 was more fun," he said. "The pursuit of it. I was only twenty-two in 1981, and I hadn't prepared myself. You feel like you're out on an island, and your friends treat you differently." Unlike Connors, McEnroe was genuinely liked by other players—Gerulaitis and Fleming were among his closest friends. (It was Fleming, his doubles partner, who said that the best doubles team in the world would be "John McEnroe and anyone.") On the court, though, he never seemed to be enjoying himself; he looked angry, even when he wasn't. His best year, 1984, was marred by his most galling loss, to Ivan Lendl in the finals of the French Open. McEnroe never won the French Open, whose slow clay has thwarted Sampras (so far) and other top serve-and-volleyers, but he appeared to be in total command of this match. He took the first two sets easily, was up a break in the third, and then, inexplicably, lost that set and the next two. "Basically, I choked," he told me. "Things were going too well, and I got anxious." (The match haunts him to this day, especially when he revisits Roland Garros stadium to do his TV commentary during the French Open.) He won just about everything else that year—Wimbledon, the U.S. Open, the U.S. Pro Indoor, the Canadian Open, the Masters. His 6–1, 6–1, 6–2 demolition of Connors in the Wimbledon final was a display of near-perfect tennis. McEnroe got seventy-eight per cent of his first serves in, and made only two unforced errors in the entire match. He won eighty-two matches against three losses in 1984, still the highest percentage of the Open era, and then, suddenly, at the age of twenty-five, it was over. He would never win another major singles title.

There was no simple explanation for his decline. Burnout, waning intensity, boredom with a life spent in hotel rooms and airplanes all played a part in it. Also, the game was changing. The new racquet technology and fitness-training techniques favored power hitters like Lendl and Boris Becker, the German prodigy who won Wimbledon when he was seventeen. McEnroe hated working out—he used doubles matches to stay in shape—and he had trouble adjusting to the power game. "I didn't handle the power well," he told me. "Instead of sticking with it and taking my game to another level, I sort of let people catch up with me and pass me."

In 1986, he and Tatum O'Neal had their first child and got married, and he decided to take a six-month sabbatical from tennis. After that, he struggled for five years to come back, but never quite made it. Losing to players he considered inferior was infuriating, and the fines and suspensions mounted accordingly. In 1990, after inadvertently exceeding the new limit of three code violations in a match with Pernfors at the Australian Open, he was defaulted—for the first and only time. ("They should have defaulted me more," McEnroe said recently, surprising me. "I'm not going to say I didn't test these people. It was their job to come through and show some integrity, and they didn't do it.") There were one or two bright spots. He won the doubles at Wimbledon in 1992, with Michael Stich, and that same year he teamed up with twenty-year-old Pete Sampras to take the doubles match against Switzerland in the Davis Cup finals, which the United States won, 3–1. It was McEnroe's fifth Davis Cup, and a good note to bow out on. Although he didn't officially retire, 1992 was his last year on the pro circuit.

By that time, he was thirty-three, famous, and rich. With his father advising him on business matters, he has reportedly earned more than a hundred million dollars from tennis and commercial endorsements, far more than any tennis player in history. But after being the best in the world at something, what do you do next? By a logical enough progression, the player so often described as an artist gravitated toward the increasingly glamorous New York art world, which he had been dabbling in for some time. "Vitas Gerulaitis had suggested we go to SoHo one Saturday, back in 1979 or 1980," McEnroe remembers. "We had a little money for the first time, and it seemed more interesting to buy art than stocks. I couldn't afford the Impressionists, so I bought a couple of photo-realist paintings from the Louis Meisel Gallery." After that, McEnroe began visiting museums and art galleries in his free moments on the tour, and buying a picture now and then. He moved from photo-realism to more challenging work by recent or contemporary artists—Jean-Michel Basquiat, Philip Guston (his late work), David Smith. After seeing a show of Bryan Hunt's sculpture at the Blum Helman Gallery in the late eighties, he asked for Hunt's telephone number and went to visit him in his studio. The two of them hit it off. Hunt says, "I think he identifies more with artists than with anybody else, because he knows with artists there's a continuous, engaged quality of life." Hunt invited the McEnroes out to his rented summer house in Sagaponack, Long Island, one weekend. "It was wild," he recalls. "John comes out with Tatum, Porsche, guitar, tennis racquets. We go to the beach, come back, and he sees there's a tennis court next door. 'Let's go play,' he says. I explain that the court belongs to my neighbors, whom I've never met. He says, 'Well, who is going to turn me down on their tennis court?' So I stick my head through the bushes, where the neighbors are sitting around the pool reading the paper, and I go, 'Hello? Hello? Uh, my friend and I were wondering if we could hit a few balls . . .' And they go, 'What?' I say, 'My friend, John McEnroe, would like to hit a few balls.' The papers go down, and it's 'Oh, sure.' So all these people are watching, and I'm worse than intermediate, hitting back and forth. I say, 'Hit some serves, John.' And then I'm jumping out of the way of his serves. I've become Lendl to him. Tatum says, 'John, that's not fair, be nice.' "

Hunt introduced McEnroe to the painter Eric Fischl, who is a pretty good tennis player, and they decided to trade skills—McEnroe would give Fischl tennis lessons in exchange for drawing lessons. "He came to my studio, where I'd arranged to have a nude model," Fischl told me. "He was totally shocked. But then he started drawing, with a very sure line. He'd look at the model, then stop looking at her and start drawing. His drawing had a sureness and clarity, but none of the touch stuff that I'd sort of been expecting. What was impressive was that he didn't hesitate, he went right into it." Fischl and his wife, April Gornik, who is also a painter, took their new friend around to the Galerie St. Etienne to look at drawings by Egon Schiele, which he responded to right away. "Everything he liked seemed to me to be the best of that batch of work, and



I kept thinking, How does he know?" Gornik said. For several months in 1993, McEnroe worked without pay at the Salander-O'Reilly Gallery, on East Seventy-ninth Street, learning about the art business and going to other galleries and museums with Larry Salander.

McEnroe and Tatum O'Neal separated in 1992. There was a nasty custody fight over their three children, and McEnroe, who was in poor shape emotionally, moved into a loft he had bought on the second floor of the building on Greene Street where April Gornik has her studio. Before long, he started thinking about turning his loft into a gallery. The John McEnroe Gallery opened in December, 1993, with a show of paintings by the Italian artist Bruno Fonseca. For the first year or so, admission to the gallery was by appointment only, because McEnroe didn't want people just coming in for his autograph—he was famous enough for this to be a problem. After all, Warhol had done a portrait of him and Tatum O'Neal, a sure sign of nineteen-eighties celebrity, and he was constantly being recognized on the street.

McEnroe had started out with the idea of finding and helping young artists, but he wasn't comfortable making studio visits or dealing with the desperate neediness of unrecognized talent. He and his staff of three put on exhibitions, but a good deal of the gallery's energy went into building McEnroe's own art collection, which includes Richard Diebenkorn, Gerhard Richter, Basquiat, Alice Neel, Elizabeth Peyton, Tom Friedman, and other well-known and less-known contemporaries. "Quite a variety of artists stylistically," according to Fischl, "eclectic, and yet all related to each other in a very specific way. It all had to do with some intrinsic thing, something in relationship to the body, very expressive."

Bryan Hunt thinks that McEnroe might have had some idea of becoming an artist himself. McEnroe says no, but he did become, fairly briefly, a rock musician. Having learned the rudiments of guitar technique from Vitas Gerulaitis, he put together his own band in late 1994, with himself as the lead singer. He called it the Johnny Smyth Band, hoping that his new wife, the rock singer Patty Smyth, would get involved, but Smyth was more interested in having their first child, and she had mixed feelings about his music. "It was almost like a thorn in my side, how much he liked music and how hard he tried to get me to do it," she told me. "I also felt like, God gives you a gift, you get to be a tennis legend—I'm not sure you then get to be Keith Richards on top of that. He's not a natural musician, but he worked very hard at it. He loved it so much that he was good." According to McEnroe, Patty didn't really think that. "When my wife said, 'Imagine me playing with you in the mixed doubles at Wimbledon,' I thought, Jesus, am I really that bad? Because she doesn't play tennis." The band was getting bookings here and in Europe and cutting an album when McEnroe suddenly dissolved it in 1996, about the time he began competing more seriously on the senior circuit.

The gallery, which is more or less inactive these days, functions mainly as McEnroe's office, a place to hang out and receive calls. He no longer has a staff. (His agent, Gary Swain, handles all his tennis and commercial dealings.) There is a pool table, a set of drums, and some professional sound equipment in the big front room, along with a lot of old movie posters (he bought nine hundred of them a while back, and is selling some of them off gradually) and some paintings, drawings, and photographs he has recently acquired. He keeps up with the auction catalogues, goes to picture sales; last spring, he even thought of bidding on a Damien Hirst sculpture of two cows' heads in formaldehyde, but it went for more than half a million dollars, well beyond his range. The back room has his desk (huge), two rock guitars framed and hanging on the wall, and two very good pictures—one by Neil Jenney, the other by Philip Guston. Also quite a few crayon and watercolor drawings by his kids. "The kids are the priority, and right now he doesn't want to add another thing to take him away from them," his wife told me. He spends a lot of time with them when he's home, makes their breakfast and takes them to school. A number of times when I called him on his cell phone, it was clear from the background noises that he was on what Patty calls "kid duty"; once, I reached him on Ellis Island, with a class trip. ("I have this window, though," he confided. "I ask my wife, please, from midnight to 7 A.M., leave me that much sleep, if possible, so I can function.") The three children from his previous marriage spend every other week with them, as a rule, and during school vacations they all hang out in varying combinations at the McEnroes' triplex penthouse on the Upper West Side, or at one of their houses—in Malibu, Sun Valley, and Southampton, Long Island. The rage that still boils over on the tennis court never seems to surface at home. "He doesn't get angry with the kids," Patty said. "He's way more patient than I am. John is the most undiplomatic person you'll ever meet, but what I love about him is that he doesn't live in regret. The guy says what he thinks, and he pays a high price for that, and he doesn't complain." Smyth gets credit for curbing some of his more abrasive impulses, including his notoriously chauvinistic attitude toward women in sports. When he first started broadcasting, he criticized his old friend Mary Carillo for commenting on men's matches. "He said he had no interest in calling women's tennis," Carillo told me, "because he's not a woman and doesn't understand what it's like to have monthly periods—all kinds of crazy stuff." He's become much more respectful of the women's game; he told me that, with Venus and Serena Williams creating so much excitement, "the men may eventually have to sue for equal pay." But he also told me that "any good male college player could beat the Williams sisters, and so could any man on the senior tour."

His mind teems with future projects. He wants to establish and run a tennis academy in Flushing Meadows, on the site of the U.S. Open, to develop and train young players. He thinks about having his own talk show, on both radio and the Internet, with an open, free-ranging format that wouldn't be limited to sports. He'd like to try politics someday, maybe starting with the job of Tennis Commissioner, which doesn't exist yet. Like most of the ranking players, he thinks the United States Tennis Association doesn't do enough to develop young talent and pays too little attention to the needs and wishes of the players.

For years, he has argued that the international Davis Cup matches, instead of being spread out over the year, as they are now, should be compressed into one or two periods when they don't conflict with the major tournaments—that way the world’s top players would have more of an incentive to compete in them. (Bill Tilden was saying the same thing in 1925.) McEnroe’s passion for Davis Cup competition is part patriotism and part a reflection of his own childhood love of team sports. He simply can’t understand why any American player, injured or not, wouldn’t make it his first priority. When Sampras, pleading a hip-flexor injury, withdrew from this year’s first tie against Zimbabwe, which was to be played in Harare, Zimbabwe, McEnroe’s published comment—“I don’t think Pete really wanted to make the trip in the first place”—led to strained relations between them. They made it up, and Sampras did play in the second series, against the Czech Republic, which the United States won by a 3–2 margin. Sampras beat Slava Dosedel in the fifth and deciding singles match, but not without giving his captain a major scare. During a changeover in the first set, Sampras told McEnroe that he had just pulled a muscle in his thigh. Mindful of Sampras’s injury-prone reputation, McEnroe made it very clear that quitting was not an option. “John just said, ‘Suck it up,’ ” a grinning Sampras told the press, after dispatching Dosedel in straight sets. “John’s words on the changeover were a huge inspiration for me—you know, ‘Suck it up for forty-five minutes so we can get out of here.’ ” But then, only days before the semifinals with Spain, Sampras and Andre Agassi both pulled out. Agassi had hurt his back in a minor automobile accident. Sampras pleaded tendinitis in his shin—a condition that did not keep him from entering a Canadian tournament just a week after the Davis Cup matches in Spain. Deprived of the two top Americans, McEnroe was openly incredulous. He said that if Sampras had just come to Spain with the team, and maybe played doubles, it could have made a big difference. In his comments to the press, he contrived to blame himself for failing to “make a difference” in Davis Cup recruitment.

At ten-thirty in the morning, on the terrace of an elegant private club owned by the Real Sociedad de Tenis de Santander (established in 1906), my wife and I and twenty or thirty other people are watching McEnroe play a quick set with Mardy Fish, a rising junior player he brought over as a practice partner for the Davis Cup team. It is the last day of the Copa Davis competition here. The United States has lost the first three matches, making today’s two singles matches meaningless, and McEnroe is really pounding the ball, trying “to get the anger out,” as he put it to me a few minutes earlier. He is nailing the lines and going all out on every shot. He misses an overhead and bends double with chagrin, clutching his head in both hands. He serves two aces in a row, untouchable. The blister on his hand doesn’t exist.

After forty minutes of this, he comes over and sits on a wooden bench at courtside, where he is approached by a small, determined Spanish woman holding a camera, a pad, and a ballpoint pen. “McEnroe,” she says, “please, would you?” He tries to ignore her, but she is relentless. “Please, it has been my dream, for years.”

He looks frustrated, resentful. “*Por favor*, Madam,” he says, turning away from her.

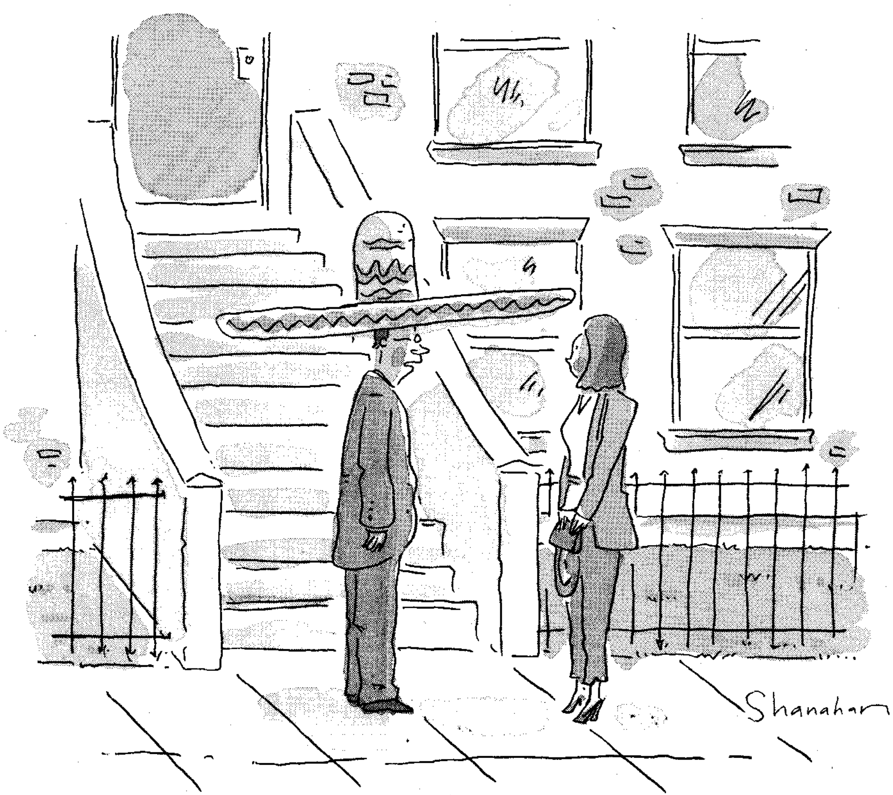
I ask him how he feels about the loss to Spain. “Well, it’s discouraging,” he says. “Like I said in the press conference, it’s either bad luck or I haven’t made a difference in getting people to play. Maybe a combination of both. One thing I’ve learned, if anything, is not to make rash decisions. But there’s a clause in my Davis Cup contract that says I can get out after one year. Just in case—you know, guys can’t play—the unforeseen happens.” He’s grinning now. The tennis did him good.

The autograph lady tries again. “McEnroe, this is my dream.”

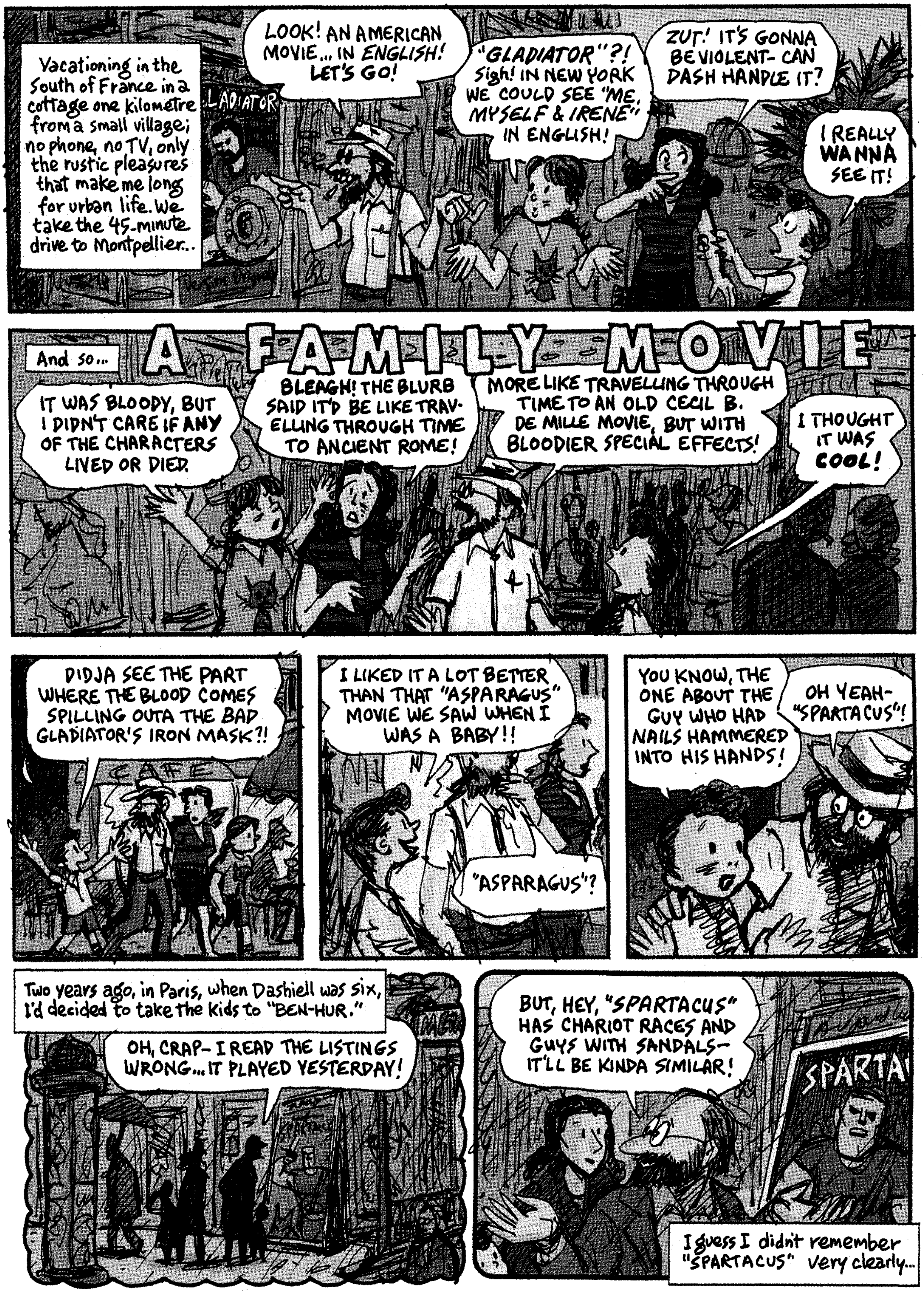
“For Christ’s sake,” he snarls, “sit down, *por favor*. You’re just being a pain in the ass, that’s all. Excuse me, please.”

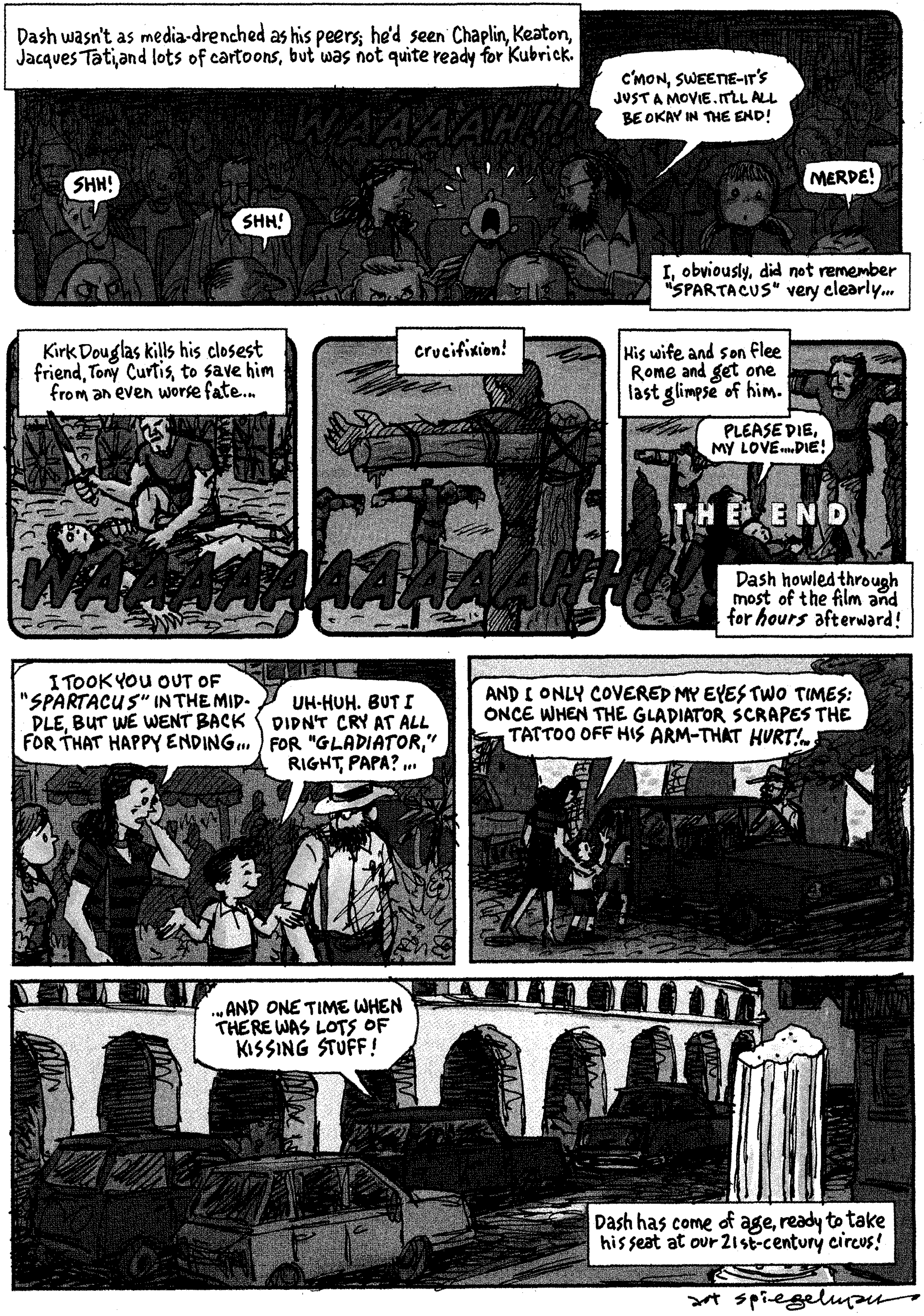
He whips off his tennis shirt, reaches into his bag for a dry one. Noticing a tattoo on his upper arm, my wife asks what it is. “Roses,” he says. “One for each of my kids, but I have work to do because when I did it I only had three, and now I have six.”

His three oldest kids are in summer camps in upstate New York, he tells us, and he’s hoping to get a six-o’clock flight this evening, from Bilbao, that will connect with the Concorde out of London in the morning, so he can spend a day with them before he goes to Chicago to play in a seniors tournament. Sitting on that bench in Santander, he looks like a man for whom everything is still possible. ♦



“Would you like to come up for a margarita?”


Vacationing in the South of France in a cottage one kilometre from a small village; no phone, no TV, only the rustic pleasures that make me long for urban life. We take the 45-minute drive to Montpellier...
LADIATOR
LOOK! AN AMERICAN MOVIE... IN *ENGLISH!* LET'S GO!
"GLADIATOR"?! Sigh! IN NEW YORK WE COULD SEE *"ME, MYSELF & IRENE"* IN ENGLISH!
ZUT! IT'S GONNA BE VIOLENT- CAN DASH HANDLE IT?
I REALLY **WANNA** SEE IT!
And so...
A FAMILY MOVIE
IT WAS BLOODY, BUT I DIDN'T CARE IF **ANY** OF THE CHARACTERS LIVED OR DIED.
BLEAGH! THE BLURB SAID IT'D BE LIKE TRAVELLING THROUGH TIME TO ANCIENT ROME!
MORE LIKE TRAVELLING THROUGH TIME TO AN OLD CECIL B. DE MILLE MOVIE, BUT WITH BLOODIER SPECIAL EFFECTS!
I THOUGHT IT WAS **COOL!**
DIDJA SEE THE PART WHERE THE BLOOD COMES SPILLING OUTA THE BAD GLADIATOR'S IRON MASK?!
CAFE
I LIKED IT A LOT BETTER THAN THAT "ASPARAGUS" MOVIE WE SAW WHEN I WAS A BABY!!
"ASPARAGUS"?
YOU KNOW, THE ONE ABOUT THE GUY WHO HAD NAILS HAMMERED INTO HIS HANDS!
OH YEAH- "SPARTACUS"!
Two years ago, in Paris, when Dashiell was six, I'd decided to take the kids to "BEN-HUR."
OH, CRAP- I READ THE LISTINGS WRONG... IT PLAYED YESTERDAY!
BUT, HEY, *"SPARTACUS"* HAS CHARIOT RACES AND GUYS WITH SANDALS- IT'LL BE KINDA SIMILAR!
SPARTA
I guess I didn't remember "SPARTACUS" very clearly...


Dash wasn't as media-drenched as his peers; he'd seen Chaplin, Keaton, Jacques Tati, and lots of cartoons, but was not quite ready for Kubrick.
WAAAAAAAH!!!
C'MON, SWEETIE—IT'S JUST A MOVIE. IT'LL ALL BE OKAY IN THE END!
SHH!
SHH!
MERDE!
I, obviously, did not remember "SPARTACUS" very clearly...
Kirk Douglas kills his closest friend, Tony Curtis, to save him from an even worse fate...
Crucifixion!
His wife and son flee Rome and get one last glimpse of him.
PLEASE DIE, MY LOVE....DIE!
THE END
WAAAAAAAAAAAHH!!!
Dash howled through most of the film and for hours afterward!
I TOOK YOU OUT OF "SPARTACUS" IN THE MIDDLE, BUT WE WENT BACK FOR THAT HAPPY ENDING...
UH-HUH. BUT I DIDN'T CRY AT ALL FOR "GLADIATOR," RIGHT, PAPA?...
AND I ONLY COVERED MY EYES TWO TIMES: ONCE WHEN THE GLADIATOR SCRAPES THE TATTOO OFF HIS ARM—THAT HURT!...
...AND ONE TIME WHEN THERE WAS LOTS OF KISSING STUFF!
Dash has come of age, ready to take his seat at our 21st-century circus!
art spiegelman

A REPORTER AT LARGE

A HOLE IN THE GROUND

Was there a Cape Cod serial killer?

BY ALEC WILKINSON

Late one afternoon in January of 1993, a hand-drawn map, transmitted by fax machine, arrived at the police station in Wellfleet, Massachusetts. The map depicted a cemetery in Wellfleet. It had been found in a pickup truck in Maryland that belonged to a homeless man named Hadden Clark. A detective in Maryland had sent it. As a child, Clark had spent summers in Wellfleet at the house of his grandfather, Silas Clark. Silas, his wife, and their son, Hadden, Sr., were buried side by side in the cemetery portrayed on the map.

Two months before the map arrived, Hadden Clark had been arrested in Bethesda, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, for the murder of a young woman named Laura Houghteling. Clark had worked several hours a week as her family's gardener. In warm weather, he lived at a camp in woods a few miles from the Houghtelings' house. At the camp, he had a bed, a table, chairs, some books, and what he called "tree-to-tree carpeting." The rest of the time, he slept in the back of his pickup truck, in places such as church parking lots, where he thought no one would bother him. Laura Houghteling failed to show up one day for work—it was October 19, 1992. Within a few days, a pillowcase was found in a small strip of woods not far from the family's house. On the pillowcase was some blood, which turned out to be Houghteling's, and faintly embedded in the blood were several ridges of a fingerprint that was eventually identified as Clark's.

On the map of the Wellfleet cemetery, in the area where his father and his grandparents were buried, Clark had drawn an "X." The Maryland detective asked the Wellfleet police if they would see whether anything seemed out of the ordinary in the vicinity of the "X." Laura Houghteling's body had not been found, and what the detective had in mind was that Clark might have buried her in the cemetery.

The chief of police in Wellfleet is Richard Rosenthal. He and one of his sergeants drove down a sand road in the cemetery until they came to the ground by some oak trees where the Clarks have their graves. "It was cold," Rosenthal says, "getting dark, and right in front of the grave marked 'Hadden Clark, Sr.,' it was clear that the earth had been disturbed." Rosenthal called the Massachusetts State Police, and said that "there might be a body buried in the cemetery." The next day, a state policewoman arrived with a dog that had been trained to find human remains, a cadaver-recovery dog.

"We're in the cemetery, and the officer starts rubbing the dog," Rosenthal says. "She's saying, 'You want to go to work, you ready to work?,' getting him excited, and then she says, 'O.K., go to work, find it, go find it.' The dog runs back and forth among the graves—nobody's pointed him in any direction, they don't want to give him any idea where he should be looking—and in about thirty seconds he's by the disturbed piece of ground, and he's digging furiously."

Rather than dig anymore, Rosenthal called the police in Maryland. A couple of detectives arrived two days later. "We get shovels and dig up the spot, me and the Massachusetts State Police and the detectives from Maryland, and nothing's there," Rosenthal says. "Dig a little more. Still nothing. It's winter, it's cold, damp, and we're standing around a hole in the ground, looking at each other and shaking our heads. I know *now* what happened—I know most of what happened, anyway—but for eight years I didn't know anything."

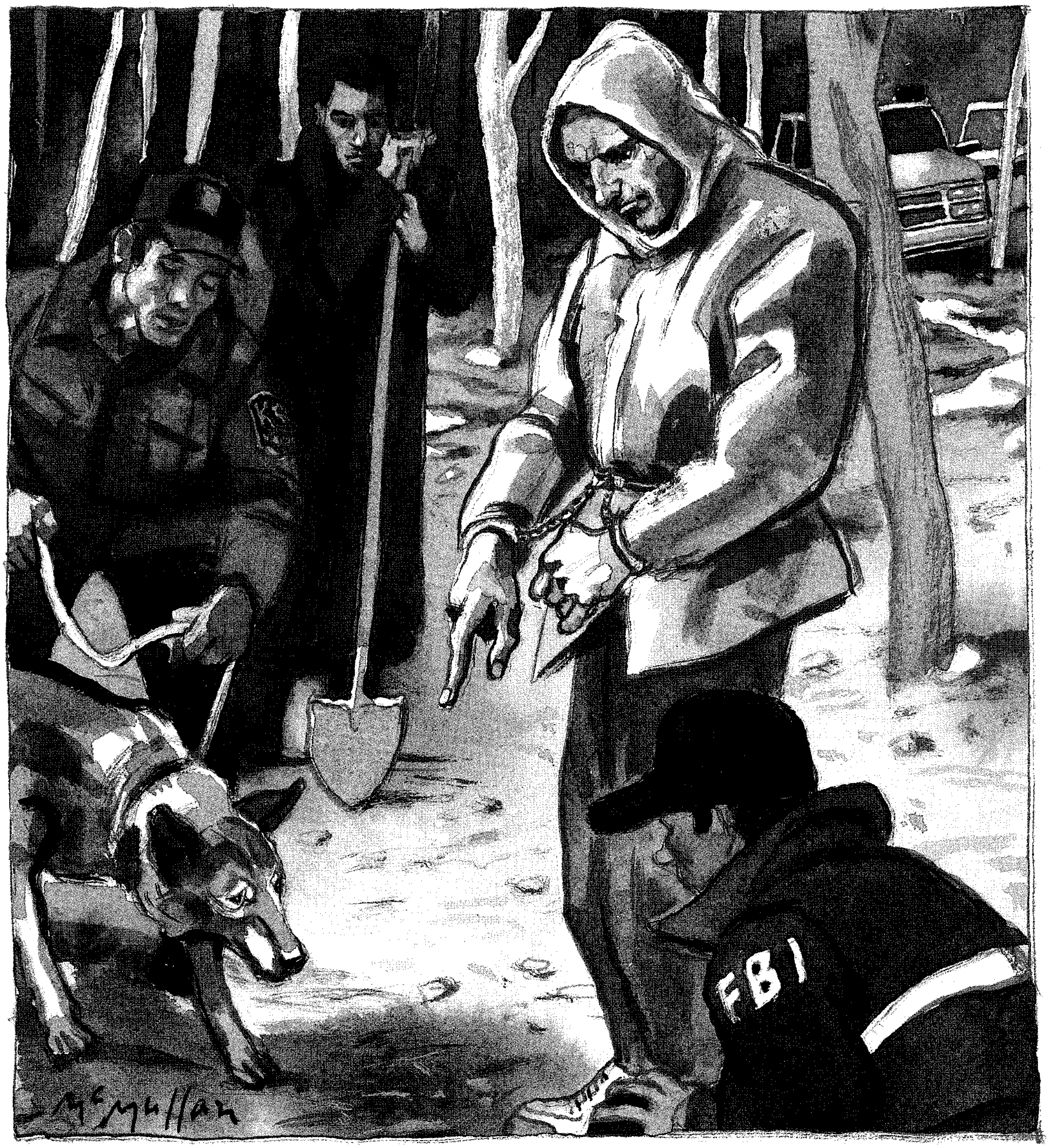
On the morning of October 19, 1992, a housekeeper for a neighbor of the Houghtelings was waiting for a bus across the street from their house. She was accustomed to seeing Laura and her mother, Penny, leave for work together. On that day, Penny Houghteling, a psychotherapist, who was divorced, was attending a conference in North Carolina. Someone the housekeeper took to be Laura came out the front door, wearing tan pants and a trenchcoat and carrying a black handbag. The figure, it turned out, was Hadden Clark. He sometimes liked to dress as a woman.

That evening, Laura's brother, Warren, organized friends to look for his sister. When they didn't find her, he called the police. The next day, Penny Houghteling returned home. Among other things, she mentioned to the police that before she left she had told Hadden Clark that she would be gone for a week and wouldn't need him to work.

The police called a number where Clark received messages and asked him to visit the station for a talk. The next afternoon, he gave them an account of where he had been for the last few days. Then he left. On his way out, he began crying; he later said it was because he felt so bad for Penny and Warren.

The following evening, the police turned off the lights in Laura's bedroom and sprayed the floor and the bed with chemicals that detect the presence of blood that can't otherwise be seen—blood that has been cleaned up, for example. When the chemicals come into contact with blood, they produce a luminescence that is like the color of phosphorus in seawater. Nothing appeared on the floor, but nearly the entire mattress lit up.

A few hours later, the police stopped Clark's truck, and he got out of it. A detective named Ed Tarney asked him if he had seen Laura Houghteling. He said, "I'm so scared," and started crying. Tarney said that there was nothing to be afraid of, and Clark got down on one knee and said, "Oh, God, I just want to die." Tarney took him to the police station. Clark was wearing a T-shirt and jeans and a woollen sailor's cap. Tarney asked him whether he thought Laura was pretty. He said that he hadn't paid much attention to her. When Tarney



How many women did Hadden Clark kill? The Wellfleet police and the F.B.I. look for two more bodies he claimed to have buried.

JAMES McMULLAN

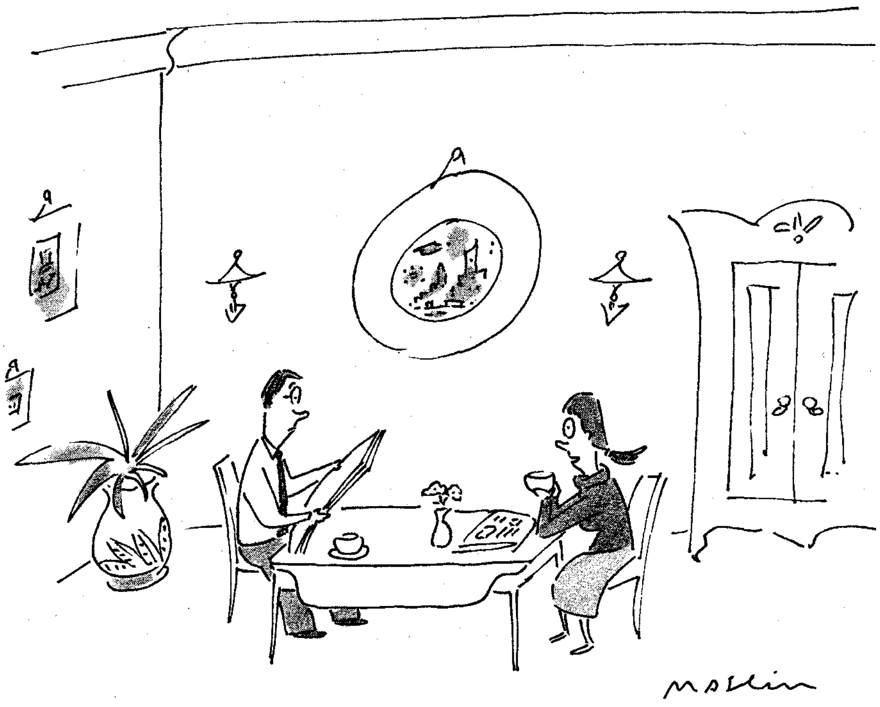
asked, on a hunch, what he had done with her, he pulled the cap down over his face and refused to say another word.

"We didn't know *what* we had at that point," Tarney says. "We knew we had a nut, but was this head case smart enough to hide her body and clean up the crime scene? We just didn't know if he was that sophisticated." The police let him go because they had no evidence on which to press charges, but they kept an eye on him.

The next Sunday, Clark attended church, and in the collection plate he left a note that said:

> Hadden I. Clark homeless
> Is life really worth living any
> More or is it time to commit suicide.

Around the twenty-ninth of October, the police gave up watching Clark. A week later, they identified his fingerprint on the pillowcase, and on the night of November 6th they found his truck in a church parking lot. Peering through a window of the truck's cap, they saw him asleep, with his arms around a Teddy bear. When they told him that he was under arrest for the murder of Laura Houghteling, he said, "O.K." At the police station, they left him in a room and watched him through a one-way mirror. He looked around, he



"Please talk about Bush and Gore—I want to see your eyebrows dance."

• •

shifted in his seat, and then he leaned over and said to his Teddy bear, "Not getting out of this one."

A few weeks before Clark's trial was to begin, in June, an inmate at the county detention center where Clark was being held told the police that Clark had been sitting at a picnic table in the yard one day while some prisoners were playing volleyball. The ball rolled over to him, and they asked him to throw it back, but he didn't. He was sitting with his head in his hands, and he was crying and saying, "I shouldn't have killed her, I shouldn't have killed her." The day before the trial, Clark pleaded guilty to second-degree murder; he received a sentence of thirty years. A few days later, he led the police to Laura Houghteling's body, which he had buried in Rockville, next to Bethesda, in woods near a highway exit ramp.

Laura Houghteling was not the first person Hadden Clark killed. In May of 1986, he killed a six-year-old girl named Michele Dorr, who had disappeared from her father's house in Silver Spring, Maryland. Michele's parents were in the midst of a spiteful divorce, and the girl lived with her mother and visited her father on weekends. Carl Dorr, Michele's father, told the police that his daughter had vanished after he had filled a wading pool for her in the back yard and then gone inside to watch the Indianapolis 500 on TV. He said that he had last seen her a little after two o'clock, when she came inside for a towel.

Hadden Clark was living two doors away, in the basement of his brother Geoffrey's house. Geoffrey had a daughter a little older than Michele, and the girls sometimes played together. The police spoke to Clark, and during the interview he threw up. He had arrived at work, though, at 2:45 in the afternoon, and the police decided that there hadn't been sufficient time for him to kill Michele, dispose of her body, and show up at his job.

After Laura Houghteling's murder, Ed Tarney became convinced that Clark had also killed Michele Dorr. In 1995, Carl Dorr told him that he had last seen his daughter not at two o'clock but perhaps as much as an hour earlier. Whenever Tarney questioned Clark, however, he said he'd had nothing to do with her disappearance. A year later, an inmate at the prison where Clark was serving time told Tarney that Clark had talked about killing Michele Dorr. The inmate asked Clark why he had done it, and he'd said that he hadn't meant to. In the fall of 1998, Tarney and another detective brought Clark to an interrogation room and left him to sit by himself. He began making a series of gestures he sometimes makes and that he says are American Sign Language. He sang a song:

> He's still working on me
> To make me what I ought to be.
> Took Him just a week to make the moon
> and the stars, sun and the earth
> And Jupiter and Mars...
> How loving and patient He must be...
> He's still working on me.
> There really ought to be a sign upon my
> heart.
> Don't judge her yet, there's an unfinished
> part.
> But I'll be perfect just according to His
> plan
> Fashioned by the Master's loving hand.

Tarney and the detective came into the room and hung a poster-size photograph of Michele Dorr on the wall. The photograph had appeared time after time in newspapers and on television, and when they asked if he knew who she was, he said, "Yup." In one of his storage lockers, the police had found a collection of tools that a landlord of Clark's said Clark had stolen from him. Tarney showed Clark pictures of the tools and asked if he could identify them. "That's mine," he said. "I got that from my grandfather's workshop . . . That's mine. I got it when I was in high school . . . This was an old vise that came out of my grandfather's shop up in Wellfleet . . . He used these tools to tune pianos," and so on. They showed him a collection of Chinese coins.

"Money, my coin collection," Clark said.

"You speak Chinese?" Tarney said.

"Yup."

"You *speak* Chinese?"

"Yup, I speak German."

"You speak *Chinese*?"

There was a pause, then Clark said, "I don't speak Chinese. But I listen to Chinese music. I listen to a lot of different types of music. I listen to Chinese music. I listen to Mexican music, too. Caribbean. I like Caribbean music, too."

About an hour had gone by when Tarney placed a document several pages long on the table in front of Clark—a warrant charging him with Michele Dorr's murder. The other detective then asked if Clark wanted some coffee, and he said he did, and the detectives went to get it. They knew that Clark had a habit of talking to himself, and they wanted to see what he might say. He turned the pages of the warrant. He said, "Oh, well." He took the picture of Michele Dorr from the wall and put it face down on the table. He sat with his elbows on his knees and clasped his hands. He said, "Oh, well, going to court." He read slowly through the pages. He rubbed his chin. He said, "Oh, well, I'm the Rockville Rocket, the Rockville Rocket, that's me." Then, "This could be just a bunch of bullshit to try and break me." He spread his elbows on the table and put his head down on the warrant with such force that someone opened the door and said, "You all right?" Then Clark folded the warrant, put it in his pocket, and sat back and waited for his coffee.

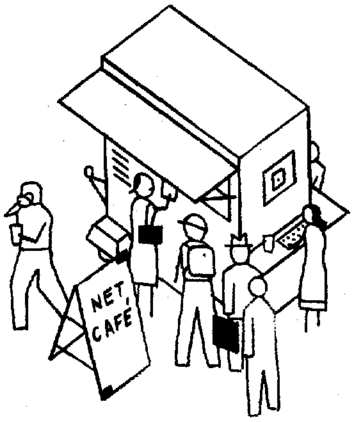
In October, 1999, Clark was tried for the murder of Michele Dorr. The doctors who examined him concluded that he was fit to stand trial. The prosecution relied on remarks he had made to other convicts, and Clark was found guilty and given another thirty years.

Shortly before last Christmas, Clark began describing murders for which he has not been charged. He says that he killed a girl "named Sarah" in Massachusetts, in 1985, and that he consumed some of her remains before burying her in Wellfleet. The details of his description of the girl and her disappearance match those of a girl named Sarah Pryor, who vanished that year from Wayland, a suburb of Boston. In addition, he has described two murders on Cape Cod. One is of a woman whom he says he met in Vermont in 1975 or 1976 and drove to Wellfleet, then killed and buried on his grandfather's property. Her body has not been found. He also says that he killed a woman who is buried in the Provincetown cemetery under a marker that says "Unidentified Female Body Found Race Point Dunes July 26, 1974." In newspaper stories, she is often referred to as "the Lady in the Dunes."

Two years after Clark pleaded guilty to killing Laura Houghteling, the Wellfleet police searched for Michele Dorr's body in the cemetery with another cadaver dog. This one was trained to lie down when it detected the scent of a corpse. Left to wander among the graves, the dog passed one headstone after another until it arrived at the Clark family plot, and then it circled the family's graves and lay down where the other dog had burrowed. This past January, and again in April, the Maryland police, along with the F.B.I., brought Clark to Wellfleet hoping to find Sarah Pryor and the woman from Vermont. So far, they haven't found the remains of either of them, and it is possible that Clark's accounts of both murders are imaginary.

I heard about Clark last winter from Richard Rosenthal, the Wellfleet police chief. The name Hadden Clark was obscurely familiar to me, but I couldn't figure out why until my mother told me that he and I had played together occasionally as children. I must have been very young, because I don't remember it. My parents built a house in Wellfleet in 1952. One of Hadden's uncles was a plumber in town, and he dug my family's well. Sometimes, when he came to repair the pump, my mother says, he brought Hadden with him. I have an incomplete memory of standing beside a skinny, shivering boy named Hadden (swimming lessons, Gull Pond), but Clark has told me that he didn't learn to swim in Wellfleet. Most of his time in Wellfleet, he says, was spent in the woods around his grandfather's house.

Clark's murder of the young woman in Wellfleet, in 1975 or 1976, was of particular interest to me because, at the time, I was a policeman in Wellfleet. I had just graduated from college, with a degree in music. I had never seen people threaten each other and look as though they meant it; I had never seen people really scared; I had never seen someone hanging from a rope he had strung from the ceiling. One of the men I worked with had been a policeman in Washington, D. C., and he used to say that everything he had seen in Washington he eventually saw in Wellfleet, too. What I think he left out, at least what I never saw, was an example of what I would call evil. I think of evil as the ability to see another person as an offering for your amusement—as prey.



I was inept as a policeman, but I was also doing the best that I could. It never occurred to me while I was crashing police cars or sleeping in the woods when I should have been on patrol that anything serious might have been happening somewhere else in the town. I used to drive slowly past Silas Clark's house late at night and shine the police car's spotlight into the woods, looking for deer. It makes me shudder to think that on one of those nights I might have illuminated a man engaged in digging a grave.

Last November, Clark was transferred to a prison where he shared a cell with another murderer, a man who has a beard and long hair. Soon after they met, Clark told his cellmate that God had recently visited him and had shaken his hand and said that he was sending someone to hear his sins. "I know who you are," Clark said. "You're Jesus." Not long ago, I wrote to Clark, asking if I might talk to him. When I received no reply, I wrote to Jesus—because he is a confidential informer, I cannot use his name—and one night I got a collect call from him.

After we had talked for a while, Jesus said that he would ask Clark to call me. The only complication, he said, was that Clark believes himself to have two personalities. The second personality belongs to Kristen Bluefin, a woman. Kristen says that she committed the murders, and that Clark is blameless. When she takes over Clark's personality, he is apparently unaware of what she is up to—until she withdraws.

I asked Jesus what Kristen was like, and he said, "The whole demeanor to me changes when he's Kristen. When you talk to Hadden sometimes, he'll bow his head and talk with his eyes closed and constantly fiddle with his watch. He's kind of slow and a little retarded. Kristen is smart and evil. You can see there's nothing behind the eyes with Kristen—it's unnerving. I can easily vi-

sualize him in a car, dressed in women's clothes, with a butcher knife, riding the roads and looking for a victim.”

Clark was born on July 31, 1952, in Troy, New York. His father was an industrial chemist. As a toddler, he walked unsteadily and was slow to talk. When he was four, his mother took him to the Yale Child Study Center, where he was diagnosed as having some brain damage and a mild form of cerebral palsy. His parents were unhappily married. His father drank, and tended to become violent when he did. He changed jobs frequently, and the family sometimes moved as often as once a year. They spent the summers in Wellfleet, where Silas Clark, who had once been the mayor of White Plains, New York, had retired.

In addition to his younger brother, Geoffrey, Clark has a younger sister, Alison, and an older brother, Bradfield, who is in prison in California. In 1984, Bradfield was a graduate student in social psychology and needed only to write his dissertation to receive his doctorate. He invited a woman he worked with and her husband to dinner at his apartment. Something prevented the husband from going, and his wife went alone. Bradfield dismembered her and hid her remains in the trunk of his car. He has said that he was drinking heavily at the time and that he has no recollection of what happened. According to Geoffrey, Hadden and Bradfield never had much to do with each other.

“Hadden was always strange,” Geoffrey says. “He was always different. As a child, he'd ignore people when they asked him a question sometimes, or run away. It wasn't that he was being rude. The concept of rude wasn't there for him. It's like someone who doesn't taste sweet. If you give them a plate of strawberries, they're not going to taste them. ‘Rude’ didn't occur to him. As he got older, a lot of his emotional development didn't move beyond being eight or ten. As a kid, he did a lot of impulsive things, but it didn't matter. As he got older, it began to matter. There were a lot of times when I got hurt from something stupid he did. I have the scars. One time, we were riding our bikes, and we were trying to learn to ride one-handed, and I told him not to ride too close to me, but he did, and we were just learning, so we didn't have that much

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SABA

SHOWCASE BY
MARTIN SCHOELLER

SIREN CALL

When the Coen brothers approached the record producer T Bone Burnett and asked him to handle the music for “O Brother, Where Art Thou?”—their version of the Odyssey, which is set in Mississippi during the Depression—he had no trouble choosing his three Sirens: Emmylou Harris (seated), Alison Krauss, and the country-folk classicist Gillian Welch (with guitar). The soundtrack is crammed with traditional songs of the American South. Among the musicians are the great Ralph Stanley (seated), performing a chilling version of “O Death”; the Peasall Sisters (center), singing “In the Highways”; and John Hartford (right), playing a beautiful fiddle version of “Man of Constant Sorrow.” The Sirens' song, Welch recalls, was the one place where the film needed new music. “T Bone brought in an Alan Lomax field recording of a song by Mrs. Sydney Carter called ‘Nobody but the Baby,’ which was really just one verse, a cross between a field holler and a lullaby. My mission was to turn that into a hypnotic, alluring Siren call. It had to be sexy and, ultimately, terrifying.”

Last May, Burnett and the Coen brothers produced a concert of the film's music at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, and enlisted the filmmaker D. A. Pennebaker to document it. For Welch, the evening was exhilarating but intense. “By intermission, I had the tremors. Because of the cavalcade nature of the show, the stakes got higher and higher. Every artist just killed.” The project had become a celebration of an endangered American tradition. “Most of the musicians who worked on it viewed the movie as a vehicle for the music,” Welch says, “and I don't think that's entirely wrong.” Pennebaker's documentary will be released at the end of the year.

—*John Mankiewicz*

control, and he swerved in front of me, and I fell and hit my head. Hadden ran home, and when he saw my parents he said, 'Don't worry, the bike's all right.'"

Clark did poorly in school. His classmates either teased him or ignored him. He was held back twice, and at ten was placed in a special school, where he did better. At fifteen, he was sent to a conventional school again and fell behind. When he was sixteen, a woman who had hired him to work in her yard found him in her house wearing her nightgown. A year later, his parents came across him wearing a nightgown and standing in front of a mirror. His mother mentioned these incidents to the therapist he was seeing; the therapist recommended that she not confront him, and she followed his advice.

After high school, Clark went to the Culinary Institute of America, in Hyde Park, New York, to become a chef. He received an associate's degree. Once, when he was angry at a teacher, he secretly urinated into a vat of mashed potatoes. From 1980 to 1981, he worked for the Norwegian Cruise Line. He specialized in making pastries, and he was also adept at carving sculptures from ice and from salt that had been baked until it was hard.

In 1982, he joined the Navy ("to get some education," he told me). According to Geoffrey, he was looking for a home. He had trouble getting along with the other sailors, though. Once, they shut him in a meat locker. Another time, he was set upon and beaten so severely that he woke up unable to recall what had happened. "I came to," he told me, "I was in the hospital. I see all these windows around me, that's how I knew it was a hospital. Navy ships don't have windows."

Clark was discharged from the Navy in 1985. In a safe-deposit box that he rented, the police found a report written by Navy doctors who had observed Clark during his hospital stay. The report says that he often felt that people intended to harm him. He thought that he had a split personality, and although he didn't like hurting people, he sometimes did things that he wasn't aware of having done. He heard voices that told him that he couldn't trust anyone, and as a result he talked only to himself. He saw things that no one else saw, but he didn't describe what they were. At times, his speech wandered, and what he said didn't always make sense. His behavior in the hospital had been notable for its "extreme seclusiveness."

After Clark left the Navy, he lived in the basement of Geoffrey's house, in Silver Spring. For a while, he worked as a cook at a country club, and when he left he was given a letter of recommendation which said that he was "diligent, punctual, and everything you could wish for in an employee." Geoffrey shared the custody of his three children while he was getting a divorce. His brother's behavior around the house was peculiar, and Geoffrey, concerned for his children, asked him to leave. On the afternoon of May 31, 1986, Geoffrey, his girlfriend, and the children went to a soccer game. While Hadden was moving out, he heard noises in the house and he went to his truck to get a knife. He found Michele Dorr in his niece's bedroom. He slashed her across the chest, and then cut her throat. He put her body in a duffelbag, then put the duffelbag in the back of his truck and left for work.

In 1988, Clark again came to the attention of the police—and was given probation. He had been boarding with an older couple, and they asked him to leave because their daughter wanted to move into the room he had been using. When he left, he stole tools, records, and some rare books from them. He wrapped fish heads in plastic and hid them around the house. Late one night, he hanged the couple's cat and left it on their doorstep. "I knew that would get to them," he later told Detective Tarney. "I knew that hurt them."

Not long afterward, Clark's mother, who lived on Block Island, unexpectedly saw him coming from her outdoor cellar, carrying things. She accused him of stealing from her. He knocked her down and kicked her until she got away. She brought charges against him, and he was put on probation for a year. She wrote him a letter saying that from then on she would pretend that he was dead, and she asked him to stay out of her life unless he got help. The letter ended, "Always remember that your mother and father loved you."

In photographs, Clark appears tall and gaunt. He shaves his head, and he also shaves his eyebrows. His features are sharp, and the expression in his eyes is often abstracted and menacing. His voice on the telephone is nasal; a detective who knows him describes it as "whiny." Over the years, Clark has used the names Hallen, Haleen, Haveen, Hadeen, and Judy Kelsoe. He often occupies himself by reading the Bible. He is given to attributing quotations to it that aren't there. He will say, "It's like the Bible says, 'Ask a stupid question, you get a stupid answer.'" Or, "Like father, like son—you ever read that in the Bible?" He also reads religious tracts that he receives in the mail. Sometimes, on envelopes and in letters, he draws elaborate pictures of smiling little girls and of hands making sign-language figures. He plays chess by correspondence with people whose names he gets from chess magazines, and he plays with other prisoners. If he feels that they are cheating, he cheats, too. He is poor at solving problems. To check into a hospital in Washington, he once drove his car to Rhode Island and left it at his mother's house, because he was not allowed to park it in the hospital lot. Penny Houghteling noticed that whenever she asked him to dig a hole in her garden she would return to find a hole twice as big as the one she had told him to make. According to Detective Tarney, who pursued Clark for years, the police in Maryland asked the F.B.I.'s Behavioral Science division to assess him. "They took one look at him," Tarney says, "and told us, 'You got your hands full. Never seen anyone like him.'"

The first secret Clark confided to Jesus was that one of the things he had buried in the Wellfleet cemetery was a bucket containing jewelry he had taken from people he had worked for and from girls and women he had killed. He said that he'd buried the bucket after killing Laura Houghteling, during the period when the Maryland police had given up following him. On his way back to Maryland, he got as far as the rotary in the town of Orleans, twelve miles from Wellfleet, when he said to himself, "Hadden, you didn't do a good enough job." He went back to the cemetery and dug up the bucket and something else he had buried along with it—he didn't say what—and then he drove to his grandfather's house. He unloaded the bucket and the second parcel at the bottom of the driveway, out of sight of the house, introduced himself to the caretaker, asked if he could look around, then retrieved the bucket and the parcel and buried them separately in the woods behind the house.

Shortly before last Christmas, Clark

told Jesus that what he had buried in the Wellfleet cemetery that had drawn the cadaver dogs was the body of a little girl named Sarah. He also drew a map of some woods in Silver Spring, where he said that he had buried Michele Dorr. Jesus told his wife what Clark had said, and she called a state trooper she knew.

Not long after that, Detective Tarney, Chief Rosenthal, and officers from the Massachusetts State Police, following Clark's instructions, dug up the bucket that Clark had described to Jesus. It was perhaps two feet belowground. Attached to it was a shred of plastic which had apparently torn loose from a trash bag. The bucket contained two hundred and thirty pieces of jewelry—valuable bracelets and earrings and little bead chokers strung on rubber bands, such as a child would wear. One of the items was a brooch with a winged female figure reclining against a blanket. Television reporters like to say that he calls the brooch his "Angel of Death," and that he wore it whenever he killed someone. Clark says that somebody else must have given it that name, because he sure didn't. He says that the brooch had belonged to a girl named Debbie, whose car broke down in Pennsylvania during the seventies. He gave her a ride, and she kept asking to drive his car, and he got annoyed and killed her and buried her. Also in the bucket were a ring and a watch that Penny Houghteling later recognized as having belonged to her daughter.

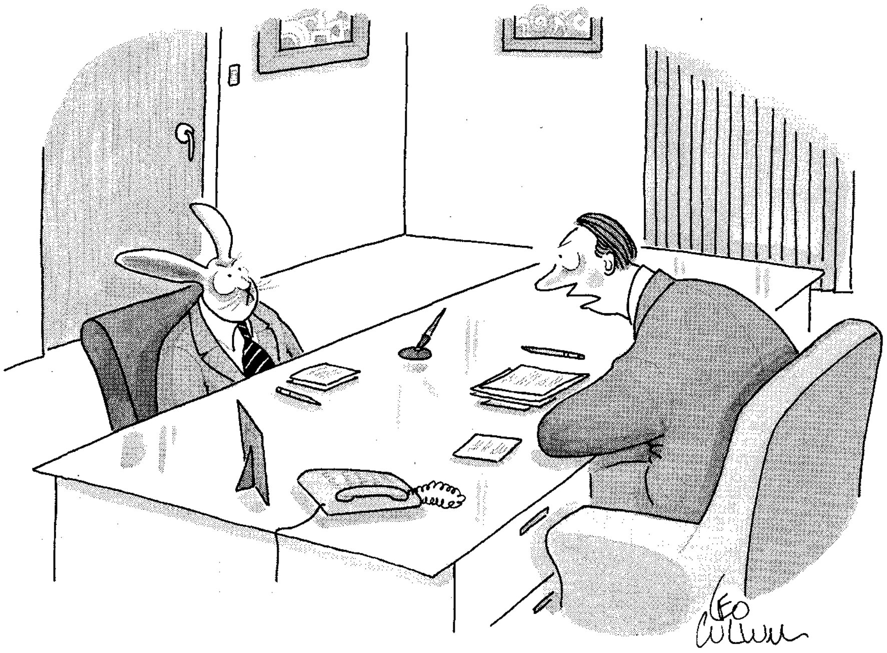
In January, the police took Clark to a ravine in Silver Spring. They also took Jesus with them, since Clark talked more readily to him than to anyone else. Fourteen years had passed since Clark had buried Dorr, and the map turned out to be inaccurate. He told Tarney that he had placed an old box spring over her and then covered the box spring with dirt. After the dogs had worked for several hours without finding anything, one of the dog handlers took Clark aside, as Tarney says, "to clear his head from all the people standing around being a distraction. He was about twenty feet away from me, talking to the dog handler about what time of day it had been when he buried Michele and where the sun had been. I looked down and saw a wire sticking up and started pulling it, and it looked to be about the size of a child's bed. I said, 'Hadden, is this it?' He came over and looked around at the trees and the landmarks, and then he got down on his knees and started pawing the ground."

All of my conversations with Clark took place after midnight, which is the only time that he was allowed to use the phone. Jesus told me that if I wanted to discuss Clark's crimes with him I had to address him as "Kristen." When Clark finally called me, I said, "Hello, is this Hadden or Kristen?" He said, "Who do you want?" I said, "Well, I have some questions for Kristen—is she around?" He paused and said, "This is Kristen, what do you want?"

I asked Clark if he would describe what had happened to Sarah Pryor, and he said, "O.K. That was '85, in the fall, an Indian-summer kind of day. I was on my way to the area from Maryland to see my father. He lived in Sudbury, the town next door. My father was seeing another woman then. I think my mom and dad were divorced at the time. I had just got out of the military, things weren't going so good for me. I got to the house, and he wasn't there. I had plans to help him move some things. I drove all that way to help him move some stuff, and he didn't show up. It's cancelled, big deal, but it's very frustrating to drive all that way and it's cancelled. I was on my way home. I forget what route I came through Wayland. I asked this girl about directions. I was acting like I was lost. I already felt like I was going to kill something. I don't know what makes me feel that way. I know I have a problem—if I'm doing these things, I must have a problem—but no one gives me any help. Something makes me mad, and I take my anger out on anything. You get in my way, it's like a tornado.

"So I sort of lured her into the car, pulled her in, took her to a field, one thing led to another. I told her I wanted her mom, not her. And she didn't tell me where she was. I left her in the field then, covered up, and I went to, like, one of these stores to get some plastic bags. I came back, put her in the bags. It was late in the afternoon. Only thing I left behind was her head. I dropped it just like I dropped the pillowcase in Maryland, by accident. I headed back to Maryland. I knew a rest area where I could pull over and hide it and get it when I came back up. I think it was in Rhode Island. I sort of buried it, put stuff around it so that no animal could get to it—rocks. It wasn't a permanent grave site. I had already planned going to Wellfleet to bury her at my grandfather's place. I wasn't worried about anybody finding her before I got back. I never had anybody find anything I didn't want them to find."

Sarah Pryor was nine years old in October of 1985. One warm afternoon, she told her father that she was going for a walk. She was five feet two inches



"You're making more at this firm than anyone else whose brain is the size of a walnut."

"I got rid of all the excess in my life."

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tall, with blond hair and hazel eyes, and she was last seen between four and five o'clock, at an intersection a mile from her parents' house. In late 1997, a piece of bone small enough to fit in the palm of a hand turned up in a field in the town of Wayland—a fragment, it turned out, of Sarah Pryor's skull. No other remains have been found.

Chief Gerald Galvin, of the Wayland police, told me that he had interviewed Clark and that "there was information that said to us, This is not the person we're looking for." Among the reasons the Wayland police don't believe Clark killed Sarah Pryor is that the day after she disappeared he was at a veterans' hospital in Maryland; but the trip could easily have been managed in the time Clark had available. He also identified a landmark imprecisely and failed to mention details of the town's appearance—oversights that would seem to be of no consequence, since he had merely been visiting the town.

Another night, I asked Clark about the Lady in the Dunes. She had been found, in July of 1974, in a grove of pine trees near the ocean, by a dog on a walk with its owner. She had been dead for several days. She was about five feet eight and between twenty-five and thirty years old; she was naked—her jeans and a bandanna had been folded and placed under her head; her skull had been fractured; her head had nearly been severed; and her hands were cut off and have never been found. She was described in the papers as lying on her side, but she was actually lying face down, and her wrists had been forced into the sand, as if she were doing pushups. Presumably, the police had withheld this detail because only the killer would know it.

Detective Tarney first thought that Clark might have had something to do with her murder when an inmate told him that Clark had said that a good way never to be caught for a murder is to cut off your victim's hands. When I asked Clark about her, he said, "In 1974, I was vacationing on Cape Cod, at my grandfather's, and I went into one of my episodes. I was in Provincetown, and I came across a beautiful girl; I lured her into the dunes. I smacked her in the head with one of my surf-casting poles, and after she was unconscious, and I had killed her, I removed all her clothes, folded them neatly and put them under her body, and I did some things with her body. I folded up her clothes real nicely, I went back to my truck for a saw, and I cut off her hands and stuffed her arms into the sand like she was doing pushups. Then I took her hands and put them in her purse, like a beach bag. I cut off a couple of her fingers and used them for fishing bait. I buried her hands in a different place. I didn't bury her, because I was making a statement. I don't know why I was doing it; maybe if you were a trained psychologist you could tell me."

A diary that Clark has kept for the last several months begins with the observation that when he was born, his father was disappointed that he wasn't a girl. "The female thing is really embedded in him," Jesus told me. "He's been made to believe that he's a girl."

In January, after finding Michele Dorr's body and the bucket of jewelry, Tarney and several other detectives, acting as escorts, brought Clark to Wellfleet so that the Massachusetts State Police could see whether he was telling the truth about Sarah Pryor and the Lady in the Dunes. They also brought Jesus along. It was snowing when they arrived, which meant that the dogs couldn't work properly, so they waited until April, then brought Clark back again. On the way, Tarney and the others stopped at a department store in Orleans and bought Clark panties, a bra and a slip, and a skirt and a blouse. They didn't need a wig, because they'd brought one from Maryland. The clothes were necessary, because Kristen—not Hadden—was going to lead them to the bodies.

During the April trip, a second female personality emerged in Clark—Kristen's daughter Nicole. "She is, I'm estimating, about fourteen or fifteen," Jesus told me. "She's a pretty evil, pretty nasty person—a smart little kid with attitude. She was mad, because she felt that the police were disrespecting her mother. When we'd stop and go to the bathroom, they'd take her to the men's bathroom." Clark slept in the Barnstable County jail. On the way to Wellfleet, he got into a dispute with Detective Tarney and tried to bite him. "Clark goes through these tirades," Tarney says. "The night before we went to find Michele Dorr, he didn't eat, he got lethargic, he just got comatose on everybody. It's just like an exorcism he goes through." According to Jesus, the tirades are a result of a conflict between Hadden and Kristen. "When we went to get Michele Dorr," he says, "Hadden's in the holding area, and he won't talk to us—he's down on his knees, beating his head against the wall and talking in a crazy language. He was in turmoil. We didn't know it, but the problem was that Kristen had told him not to tell anyone where Michele was buried." Clark began saying to Tarney that he wanted to die, that he thought it was a good day to die. Tarney held Clark's head in his lap for twenty miles. Then Clark tried to scratch Tarney. "The next day," Tarney says, "he rode from the jail with a couple of F.B.I. agents, and he tried that stuff, and they tuned him up real cute. We brought him back, he's sporting this big black eye."

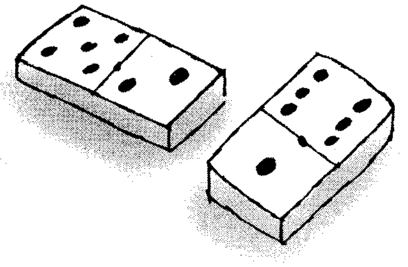
Clark and Jesus and the detectives from Maryland, along with several F.B.I. agents, arrived at the Wellfleet police station at around eleven in the morning. "Clark changed at the station—red wig, gray cotton blouse, sort of a pullover, tan skirt with a pattern," Chief Rosenthal says. "I'm tempted to use the term paisley, but I think I'm wrong."

Silas Clark's house is built on the side of a hill, about two and a half miles from the Wellfleet police station. "We go up the driveway," Rosenthal says, "take him out, he starts walking the area, and eventually he points out several sites where he says he threw dead bodies." The dogs that had been brought to help had never made old finds—that is, discovered bodies that had been in the ground for as long as these might have been. In such cases, the chemicals that provide a scent are not so easily located; they drift and disperse. The dogs failed to find a scent.

Clark had marked the spot where he had buried the bucket filled with jewelry because he intended to return for it, but he had never marked the graves. "I never planned to come back and get the bodies," he told me. "I was done with them. I didn't care where they were." He also said that he felt the Massachusetts State Police didn't work sympathetically with him or give him enough time, unlike the Maryland police when they'd found Michele Dorr. On that occasion, Jesus says, Clark and the dogs and the detectives walked past her grave perhaps fifteen times before Clark and Tarney finally found her remains. In Wellfleet, when Clark pointed to the place where he thought Sarah Pryor was buried, the Massachusetts State Police said that they'd come back to dig on another occasion. Several newspapers and television stations were following the search's progress, and the police didn't want to dig until they could do it in secret. Frustrated, Clark grabbed a shovel and began digging, but they took it away from him. Several days later, the police drove Clark to Provincetown. He led them to the area where the Lady in the Dunes had been found, but the sands had changed so much during the last twenty-five years that he wasn't able to find any of the other places that he said he remembered.

Detective Tarney believes that, unless Clark somehow heard about the murders of Sarah Pryor or the Lady in the Dunes from Jesus, he must have killed them. On their third day on the Cape, the police decided to give Jesus a lie-detector test. Jesus agreed immediately. (Later, he also agreed to have his cell searched for any papers that might contain references to the crimes.) During the test, he proved to be unintentionally resistant. Whenever he heard Clark's name, his visceral response was so emphatic that it exceeded the limits that the machine could register reliably.

Jesus told me, "I think I have an ulcer now from this guy. Since I've been dealing with him, I've been drinking Pepto-Bismol like you probably drink water. My face has a rash from internalizing stuff. He's just not the normal person you meet in prison who killed somebody and that's trying to make amends, or trying to make a better life. Or is sorry for anything he's done. He's the person that if you let him out he'd resume his life and sickness. For the rest of his born days, he should be locked up in a mental hospital for the criminally insane. I asked him, 'What would you do if you got out?' He said, 'What do you think?' I said, 'There'd be a lot of bodies, huh?' and he said, 'What do you think?' "



On the way back to Maryland, Clark apologized to Tarney for not being able to lead the police to the bodies, as he had done twice in Maryland. "He got like a little kid," Tarney says. " 'I didn't send you on a wild chase,' he said. 'Who I told you was up there is up there.' "

In May, the Massachusetts State Police quietly returned to Silas Clark's property with ground-penetrating radar. The readings they got did not tell them whether there were bodies where Clark had said there would be, and they plan to return again. In the minds of people who are familiar with the abilities of the cadaver dogs, however, there is no doubt that Clark buried human remains in the Wellfleet cemetery. Two dogs, on four occasions, led their handlers to the place where the first dog had dug. Furthermore, it seems that sufficient time has passed that the site no longer provokes them to a response.

"Clark's not the most organized person," Rosenthal says. "He doesn't always state clearly what's on his mind, and there's always the suspicion that he's misleading you—he gives you a little truth, a little fantasy, a little truth, a little fantasy. Also, it's hard to translate what he says, and that's what you're doing—translating. You're not speaking to Hadden, you're speaking to Kristen. My view is that he's clearly a person with the mind-set to kill people. When given the opportunity, he does it. He does it for a number of reasons; one is sexual, one is revenge or anger. Or he just likes it. He's probably been killing since he was twenty. He says so. You have to give him some credence. There have been fifteen hundred missing women in the last fifteen to twenty years. I think he can legitimately lay claim to a few of them. As for the graves in the woods, I have no doubt that there is the body of a little girl buried somewhere in my town." ♦

FICTION

NO LIFE

BY J. ROBERT LENNON

In the sun-blasted park, at the water's edge, a titan willow shades a circle of grass and lake. Beneath it the children can be seen, wearing red T-shirts, white sneakers, and tan shorts. There are about twenty-five of them, from four years old to fourteen. A few brave the heat with a soccer ball; most are engaged in a game that seems to involve keeping a bunch of beanbags in the air. The grass is dead: it's late June, and there hasn't been a day of rain in three weeks. Edward and Alison are watching from their car.

Edward is thinking that, from here, they all look pretty good. Scrubbed and uniformed, the children glance from time to time at the organizers grilling meat nearby, setting out foil-covered plates on a folding buffet table. The sight gives Edward a magnanimous, fatherly feeling. He thinks he'd better keep this feeling in check: You don't go hungry to the grocer's, he likes to say.

Alison is thinking, I don't want a white one. I don't want to be one of those people who has to have the right kind. Give me a black one or a Chinese one or something: they're all kids; they've all got good hearts; it doesn't matter.

Neither gets out of the car. Edward says, "Couldn't have picked a nicer day."

Alison sighs. "The grass," she says.

Then they notice the other couples. How could they have missed them? They're so conspicuous, each standing alone, far, far from the other couples, all of them perfectly still, watching. They're clean, neat, studiously casual: belted shorts and golf shirts for the men, sundresses and summer hats for the women; exactly the way Edward and Alison are dressed.

The children don't seem to notice. Some have been passed over a hundred times. Some have no hope at all, Alison is thinking, but they've come anyway, just in case. They're playing, just like normal children. They *are* normal children, she reminds herself.

"There," Edward says, pointing. A couple is making its move, heading for a spot beneath the willow where three children are playing a board game on the grass. As they approach, the man and woman bend over, readying themselves to speak. One child, a black-haired, dark-skinned boy, looks up.

The couple is intercepted by an organizer.

"Whoops," says Edward.

The organizers are wearing white T-shirts with an insignia on the breast. This organizer, a plump, youngish woman, has her hand stuck straight out to be shaken. The man and woman right themselves to clasp it. They are led to a buffet table and given name tags. The black-haired boy watches until he's handed the dice. Then he turns back to his game. The woman, narrow-faced, wan, thin-haired, continues to stare at the boy until her husband pulls her away.

"I can't do this," says Alison.

"It's a walk in the park," Edward tells her, then realizes the unintended joke and says, very loudly, "Ha!"

He gets out of the car; she follows.

The head organizer is named Greta. Edward misses the name when she introduces herself, and he ends up having to lean close to read her name tag. But not too close; he doesn't want her to think he's checking out her chest. Consequently, he reads it as "Great." Can that be right? She is tall and unbalanced, like a stack of colorful wooden blocks.

"I am simply thrilled to see you all here today," says Great. She has herded the couples onto a patch of grass that is burdened by direct sun, where they have been asked to sit. Behind them, the children play, stealing glances. "A few guidelines. One, we have brought no forms to fill out, nothing like that. Today is just for kicks. If you hit it off with a particular child, let us know, and we can arrange a meeting. Two, don't talk about why you're here, please. The children already know, and they are a little nervous! So talk about something else—doggies, sports, airplanes, church."

Edward thinks about how he might incorporate all these subjects in a single sentence.

Alison thinks that the other couples look better qualified, wealthier, tougher than she and Edward are. They probably have connections: she always believes all other people know one another. What if our child turns out to be religious? she wonders. A Baha'i? A Jain? There would be time to get books out of the library.

"And third, and this is most important, please: Do not, under any circumstances, ask a child if he or she wants to come home with you, O.K.? O.K.! Terrific!" Great claps her hands. The couples stand up.

Edward heads straight for the tallest child, an ugly, white-skinned boy with stretched features: a long nose; narrow, slanted, almost Asian eyes; a pointed chin. He is sitting in the shade, watching the other kids. Edward sits beside him.

"You don't want me, man," the kid says.

"Thanks for the tip," Edward tells him, and the kid looks surprised. "Why, what's wrong with you?"

"My folks were no good. Also people tried me out before, and it didn't work."

"You were bad?"

The kid laughs. "Uh-huh."

"What'd you do?"

"Smoked weed."

"Mmm," says Edward.

"I never did it before. Their freakin' real son gave it to me, except they didn't believe me when I told them."

Edward reads the kid's name tag in an ironic, obvious way. Nate. "Oh, I believe that. Kids will do anything, Nate."

Nate stares at Edward for a moment. He says, "What's your name?"

"Ed."

"Do you let kids call you Ed, or do they have to call you Mister Something?"

"It's just Ed," Edward says. "Like Cher."

Edward thinks maybe he's gone too far. Nate is squinting at him as if he were mad.

"Like *who*?" Nate says.

Alison watches Edward take off alone and feels sick to her stomach. They're in this together, she thinks. But she imagines what Edward would tell her if she said so: "We can cover more ground split up," he'd say, as if it were a scavenger hunt. And then she hears him say "It *is* a scavenger hunt, Al." He calls her Al. Most of her boyfriends had called her Allie, and the worst of them, a long-lashed pec-pumper named Lou, called her *Alison,* as if this formalized respect would fool her. Edward calls her Al and she calls him Edward. That happened on the first date. Al and Edward: it went through her head all night long. Then they got married, and tried to have a kid for nine years. She didn't want the drugs; she was afraid of octuplets, and then what? Aborting some, but not others: that wasn't for her, it seemed so arbitrary. What if they killed the wrong ones? So adoption is it. It's the right thing to do. They read about the picnic in the paper.

A child comes to her, a tiny white boy. "Fow me dis!" he says. "Fow it to me!" He thrusts a Frisbee at her. She draws back, horrified, and it tumbles to the ground. The child picks it up and hands it to her again.

"Oh! I don't know. . . ." It's a test, she thinks. It's a test and I'm flunking!

The child runs away to a small group of older boys. They are grinning with apparent mischief. "All right!" she calls out. "Get ready! Here it comes!"

She throws the Frisbee, and it wallows in the air and falls ten feet short. "No!" the child says. "Wike dis! Wike dis!" He grabs the Frisbee and flings it away, over the heads of the other children, and they chase it and are gone.

She wanders, watching Edward out of the corner of her eye. He is talking to exactly the wrong kid. She's done research. *Adolescents and teens may already have developed beyond your ability to control them.* Sometimes she sus-

EMILY MOTT

pects that Edward doesn't want a child at all, and that this secret truth has rendered them infertile. She's not sure of the mechanics of the thing, but it is as easy to believe as what the doctor has told them.

At first, their desire for children was as passionate and straightforward as a Labrador retriever, and as thoughtless. They liked each other and wanted to replicate themselves. They screwed with delightful abandon. Once it was clear that things weren't working, though, sex became perfunctory. It started to seem absurd and implausible, like Twister. They still have it, of course. Sex. They call it "it." "We should do it." Neither ever refuses, no matter how unappealing the prospect, because then there would be somebody to blame for their never doing it anymore.

They are most successful at it when he wears a condom.

Alison has been thinking these thoughts for a while before she realizes how she must look: slumped, agape, alone, and she looks up, startled, at the scene around her. Predatory adults kneeling, touching, telling jokes.

Then she sees her child.

He looks like her. He has her long fingers (curled around a plastic bat), her high forehead (sweating, like hers!), her coarse, raccoon-colored hair (though on him—tousled, gently curled—it looks charming). He is so obviously the one that it takes her several seconds to realize that he is already talking to some adults, older adults. *Mature* adults. The man wears boots and a bolo tie; narrow and bent, he looks like a hick. A *rich* hick. The woman is freckled and tan. It's over; the child has been claimed.

Still, her legs take her toward the three of them.

"I don't want parents," Nate tells Edward. "I've done fine without them. Pretty soon I'll get out of high school, and I'll take the money they give me at the home and buy a bus ticket."

"Where to?" Edward says.

"Vegas."

"What's there?"

"Everything, man. Girls. Money. I want to deal poker. You ever seen those guys? They're smooth."

"I agree."

Nate looks off across the park, squinting at the bright hills and water. It would be a piece of cake to live with this kid, Edward thinks. He'd be like a roommate. Because Edward doesn't want a baby anymore, really, the same way he doesn't want a sport-utility vehicle or a handheld computer. All the years of fertility brochures and pregnancy books, all the babies who pitch for mutual funds and radial tires and insurance policies and, of course, diapers and powders and creams: all of it has driven Edward to conclude that babies are a brand name; they are a product. They are conventional. They are what other people want you to have. To hell with them, with their big round heads and skinny asses and button noses. He'll take this: this guy.

All he has to do is find Al and introduce her to the kid. He scans the crowd. There she is, standing in the sunlight with a skinny sort of ersatz Texan and his wife. Edward stands up.

"Sit tight, Nate," he says.

"Whatever."

But as he draws closer to Alison and the Texans, he realizes it isn't going to work this way. In fact, it isn't going to work at all. That's because a child is there, among the three of them, a child of about five with the long, asking-for-it face of a chronic sinus sufferer. The child is holding a busted Whiffle-ball bat, whitened and creased in the middle, where it's been pounded against a tree. When Alison turns, her eyes are chaotically glittering, as if full of broken glass. She's in love.

Damn it, things ought to be simple. Edward can sense Nate fading away behind him, like a Coke can tossed out a car window.

"Hi!" he says to the four of them, and presses his palm against Alison's humid back. Nobody says anything except the doomed child, who says, "Hello."

Edward thinks he should probably introduce himself to the adults, but he has a feeling he's not going to like them. He bends over and says, "Who's in charge here? You, sir?"

The child says, "No, Mrs. Scott is," and points across the park to the tall woman, the one who looked as though she might fall over. Great. Great Scott! Perfect! The boy is cowering, so Edward stifles his laugh. The child's name is Raymond. It's markered on his tag in that new kind of printing they teach now, with little curlicues after all the letters, so that the children will find it easier to connect them someday, when cursive is taught.

Edward feels a willful hand on his shoulder. He allows it to pull him up into a standing position.

"Harlan Breece," says the Texan. "Linda Breece." Edward shakes the man's hand and gives Linda a little bow. Then Harlan Breece shakes Alison's hand, too. Alison smiles. Everyone smiles. Harlan is sizing them up, and after a moment he turns back to the boy, his face confident and calm. Edward sees that Harlan has deemed them not worth worrying over. His wife, seeing this, too, relaxes, and a blush blooms briefly. Edward understands that a competition has begun. He turns to Alison.

"You ought to get into the shade," he says, for she is deep red and illuminated by sweat.

"I'm fine," she tells him brightly. "Raymond likes baseball. His favorite player is . . . Who is it?"

"Sammy Sosa," says Raymond.

"Son," says Harlan Breece, "you ever been to a real baseball game?"

"No, sir."

"Well, somebody ought to do something about that."

"I want him," Alison says. They are in the car with the windows shut tight, the A.C. pumping hot air into their faces. The children are climbing into a bus while someone with a clipboard checks off their names. The event is over. The two couples talked to the boy Raymond for a good twenty minutes, not moving an inch, despite the blazing sun. The Breeces revealed that they lived on the lake, that Harlan was a judge, that they really were from Texas. They'd had a child once before, a foster child, as Linda had suffered a "female problem" that prevented her from getting pregnant. The boy had gone back home after a year. The implication was that the separation had crushed Linda, and, indeed, Linda looked the part, with her moist eyes and weak chin, and the heavy upper arms Alison tends to associate with deep sadness. The Breeces had sold their ranch to a developer and moved here, of all places, to the Finger Lakes.

All of this was spoken in code, of course, with occasional frank asides to Edward and Alison, whenever a nugget of information seemed as though it might break their spirit. Judge. Money. Experience with foster children.

The teen-ager is getting on the bus now, the one Edward had been talking to. Alison says, "You could have been more helpful. Why were you talking to that young man?"

Edward's gaze follows the teen until he disappears. "Nate. I don't know. Nobody else was going to talk to him."

Though she knows it annoys him, she can't help sighing. Edward roots for the underdog. He buys cheap shirts from sale racks and votes for local crackpots every November. It's one of the things that, when she loves him, she really loves, and, when she is angry at him, she finds intolerable. He is intolerable now, but already her intolerance is on the wane. She can't seem to get worked up about anything these days. It's a feature of their marriage: as sexual passion has faded, so has pride, so has resentment. Sometimes she feels she may vanish completely.

She isn't a crier—she prides herself on this—but she begins to cry. Edward pats her leg. The air is cooling down. In fact, it is suddenly ice cold. A chill runs through her. Edward shuts off the air.

"I'm thinking of a word," he says.

"Oh, God, not right now."

"No, let's do it. You know you want to."

"I don't!" But she can't resist the game. They've played it on every road trip they've ever taken. They've played it naked. They've played it in elevators and on the Great Wall of China. She wipes her face, hangs her head, whispers, "Fallopian."

"After."

"Infertility."

He snorts. "Before."

"Uh, gum?"

"Close, in a way. After."

"Itchy," she says, scratching her legs.

"Itchy comes after infertility."

"Edward, I just don't feel like doing this right now."

"It's between infertility and gum," he says quietly. "Something delicious."

"Hot dogs. Hominy?"

"Perfect for a day like this. A sweet, refreshing treat."

She turns to him. He is holding an invisible ice-cream cone and licking it lasciviously, his eyebrows rising and falling, his eyes rolling back in his head with simulated pleasure. He has not yet noticed the approach of Harlan Breece, who is walking bent over with his hands on his khakied knees, squinting in Edward's window.

Edward sees the shadow of the massive hat falling across the dash before he hears the tap on the window, not a tap actually but a small thud, as Breece is using his fingertip, not his fingernail. In fact, Edward notes as he rolls the window down, Breece has barely got any fingernails at all. They are as irregular and receding as his hairline. He counts this as a victory and is able to meet the Texan with a broad and truly genuine smile. A ten-gallon smile, he thinks, that's how we do it in upstate New York! He realizes he is still holding the invisible ice-cream cone and releases it. Invisible ice cream splatters his thighs.

"Harlan, hello!"

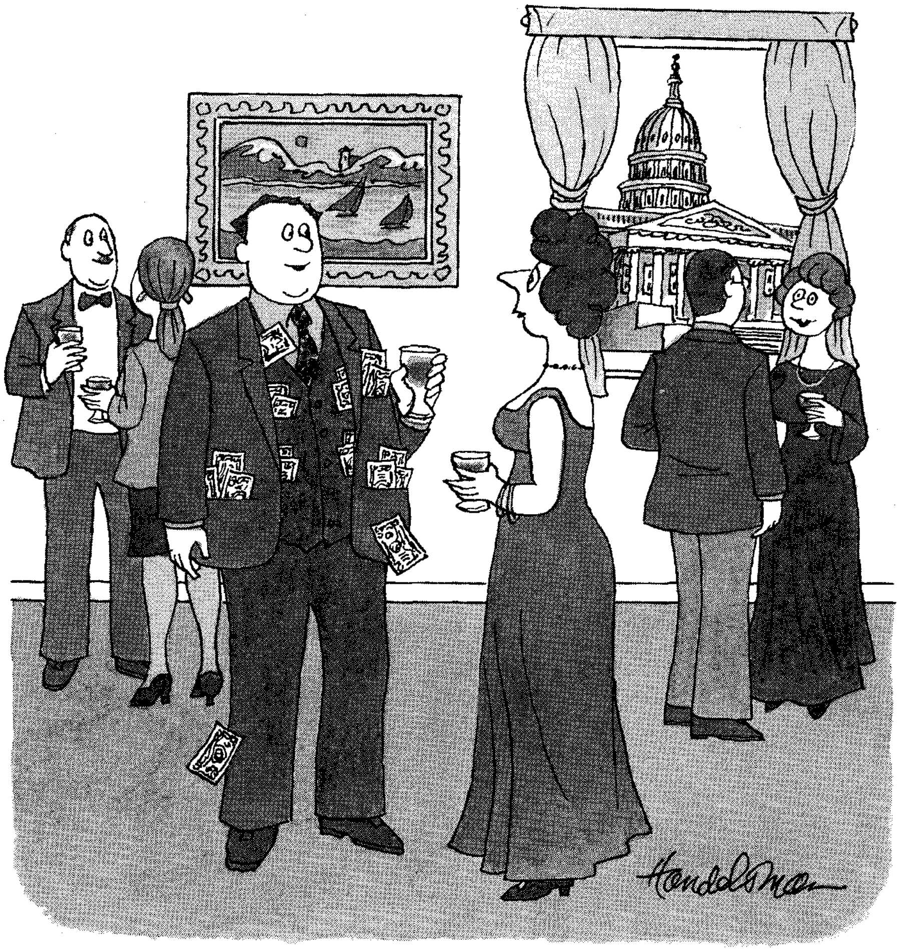
"Hi there, Alison dear," Breece drawls, glancing past Edward, "and I'm ashamed to admit I've forgotten your name." Breece grimaces calmly at him.

"Ed."

"You'll accept my apologies then, Ed, and hear me out. I'm pleased to tell you that Linda finds you both mighty charming, and she's asked me to extend an invitation to dinner up at our little lakeside cottage. We still got a little water left in the lake, in spite of this heat of yours."

We got a little water! Heat of *yours*? Edward loves it, an honest-to-God member of the privileged class, whose wife finds him and his wife *mighty charming*. Without turning to Alison, Edward says, "Well, we're real sorry about our heat, but we'd love to come take a gander at your water."

"Splendid," says Harlan Breece, and



"Some of it is soft and some of it is hard, but the main thing is that all of it is money."

angles his brush-covered panhandle of an arm in through the window. Edward shakes the hand at the end of it. "When's good for you?"

"Just about any time," Edward says as the first bad vibes reach him from Alison's side of the car. "It isn't like we need to get a sitter."

"Tomorrow? Eight?"

"Of course, sure."

The panhandle withdraws and returns, this time bearing a white slip of paper with a map printed on it. It dawns on Edward that Breece just happened to have this map on him, and probably has several more. You never know when you're going to need to invite somebody up to the shack for some pigs' feet and moonshine. He accepts the map and gives it a game squint, then nods at Harlan as he rolls the window back up, his own pumping arm looking very working class, vulgarly utilitarian, like an oil derrick.

When the window is shut tight, he turns to Alison. "That ought to be fun."

"You will be alone," she says.

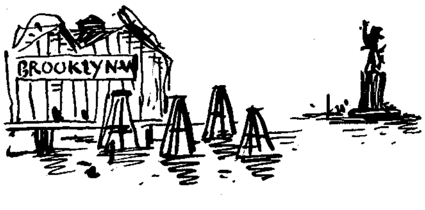
But he isn't alone when, the following night, they get into the car and point themselves north along the scenic Lake Ridge Highway. She meant it when she said it but, really, she would never abandon him. Of *course* the Breeces didn't find them *charming*, no doubt they found them odious. But tonight, none of it bothers her, because she knows that they, she and Edward, are going to win. Alison phoned up the agency first thing this morning from her desk at Spitznagel & Shay Real Estate and told the girl that they wanted to "meet with the little boy Raymond." And the girl said, "Oh, he is a cutie, isn't he? It's amazing nobody's whisked him home yet."

Nobody's whisked him home. Hanging up the phone, she pictured herself doing the whisking, ushering little Raymond into their car, into their house. The Breeces hadn't got him yet. During her lunch hour, she stopped at the library and learned that childless couples in their thirties are more likely to adopt successfully than those in their fifties, and she felt a cautious optimism. Thirties: that's us!

Or so Alison thinks. Edward, however, at thirty-seven, doesn't see himself as being in his "thirties." If pressed he would probably say he's "around twenty-five." That was his age when he met Alison, the age when he hung up his bong and shaved his beard. He regards marriage as a kind of deep freeze that perfectly preserves the version of Ed—Version 3.0, following Innocence (1.0), The End of Innocence (1.1), and College (2.0)—that got married. Sure, he's noticed a few little changes, the usual ones: the hair loss, the shortness of breath, the getting fat. But these are minor setbacks, if they're setbacks at all. When he was a kid, he'd get these hard fleshy growths on his fingertips, tiny numb extinct volcanoes, which lasted a good six months and went away on their own. That's how it is with these things.

But this morning, when he was sitting in the breakfast nook looking out at the suburban street, he suddenly found it difficult to see. He didn't know what it was at first, a darkening, a fluttering, and for a moment he thought he was having a heart attack. Just for a moment. And thinking he was having a heart attack made his heart stand briefly, horrifyingly still, so that he seemed to be having another one. Then his focus changed, and he saw that the bird feeder hanging from the eaves, suspended in the center of the window, was bristling with nuthatches. There were at least twenty, flapping madly around the six seed-choked holes, and Edward laughed and instantly relaxed. Not a heart attack! Nuthatches!

The dome light is on and Alison is trying to read the map. "There's supposed to be a secondhand-clothing place . . . and then a bridge . . . wait, two bridges, take the first left after the second bridge, not the left after the first . . . and then go 2.3 miles. . . ." The map is absurdly, counterproductively detailed, so that if they miss a single landmark they'll be eating roasted possum off the end of a stick in the woods tonight. Still, somehow, they manage to find the place. The Breeces' driveway is a couple of ruts that snake through a half-reclaimed farm field and plunge into an untrimmed copse of box elders. And beyond the treeline: Taliesin. Or something like that. Massive, slabbed, lit like a pumpkin; you can see everything inside—the furniture and art and a gigantic fireplace—and right through the back windows onto the lake and the blazing sunset reflected there. Alison suppresses a wave of hatred for the rival real-estate agency that sold it: she could have bought a baby on the black market with that commission.



They park in a gravel lot the size of a tennis court. Theirs is the only car. It is Linda who comes to the door, looking awfully tall without Harlan. She leads them inside.

Harlan is in front of the fire with a drink in his hand. A mesquite smell fills the room. "Harlan, dear," his wife calls out, and he theatrically snaps to attention and a grin spreads across his face, a wide face for such a thin guy. Edward notes a bear rug. Wow!

"Welcome, welcome!" says Harlan. He sets down the drink on a coffee table made of petrified wood and throws his arms wide.

"Howdy, pardner," Edward says, and imagines he sees a flicker of irritation on the judge's face. They shake hands. This time, Harlan uses his free hand to grip Edward's forearm, so Edward grips Harlan's forearm, too. For a moment the two men are locked in a Boy Scout Death Grip. It is Harlan who lets go. Edward notices Linda and Alison attempting to greet each other. Al is a hand shaker, and he just bets Linda is a kisser. The two stare nodding at each other from a distance of several feet.

"What's your poison, Ed?"

"Does Hizzoner drink tequila?" Ed says impulsively.

"Hell, yes."

Linda is talking about their failed foster-child experiment. Alison listens with alarm. It is a sermon, really, a testimonial, delivered with the strained alacrity of a community-college economics lecture. There is no room for question or comment.

"He was the sweetest little boy, a little black boy," Linda says. "His momma was hooked on the drugs, and he never had no daddy to speak of. His daddy wasn't ever around—well, I suppose it could have been anyone. His momma went to prison because of picking up drugs at somebody's house with the little boy in the back seat. And, well, Harlan and I saw him and we thought, He's the one. He had the sweetest kinky hair and his skin was so smooth and dark. Well.

"We brought him back to the ranch and gave him all the advantages, don't you know. He had a nanny of his own kind who was just as sweet as a biscuit, and we gave him riding lessons and Harlan took him out on the little golf course we used to have, just four holes. This was in the days before black boys played golf. And he went to a wonderful little school we found for him outside of Dallas, with children from all different races, they had the Mexicans and the Chinese and the Indians and all that. Well, we thought it would be just perfect. Except he had some trouble with reading, and they found out there was something wrong with his eyes, and also his ears, which explained why he didn't seem to be listening to what we were saying to him sometimes. If you ask me, it was the drugs, the drugs his momma took when he was in her belly. And then poor Angeline, that's the colored girl who was his nanny, she had to go back to Trinidad to take care of her momma, and the next one we got was a Mexican, name of Armada—"

"Amara," Harlan says, staring hard into his glass of tequila. Alison can't help but notice that Edward's glass is empty and that his eyes are casting about for the bottle. There it is, right in front of Harlan. She watches as Edward leans past his host and grabs it around the neck.

"Of course," Linda goes on. It occurs to Alison that they cannot possibly have any friends here. She wonders why they left Texas at all, how Harlan managed to get appointed a judge in Lake County. Edward keeps drinking. She nudges him to let him know that she considers this unwise, and Harlan, raising his eyebrows in a flirtatious manner, seems to notice.

When the story peters out, they eat. It is D.I.Y., black-bean-and-chicken fajitas. The salsa is out of a jar, a local store brand. The tortillas are cold and clammy, and the chicken has had every last drop of moisture cooked out of it. It is a cursory dinner, clearly not the intended focus of the evening. Alison begins to wonder, with some concern, what the real focus is.

After dinner, they drink some more, then Harlan gets up to take the plates to the kitchen. "A little thing I like to do for Linda," he explains. "Be a man, Ed, give me a hand here."

The two leave the room, balancing the plates in their arms. Edward is weaving dangerously. His shoulder bumps the kitchen doorway, and Alison winces. She remembers the drunken dinner parties they used to have, the giant vats of food, the shouted conversations during which not enough could ever seem to be said. And later, when the guests had gone, love. Their grad-student pals, with their retro eyeglasses and litre bottles of red wine, where are they now? Los Angeles, Costa Rica, Alaska. She and Edward were so smug about staying: real people stay put, they told themselves. And here they are, right where they wanted to be.

She turns back to Linda and has to stifle a gasp. The older woman has come to life: hands on her knees, she leans forward as if to impart a powerful secret. Her eyes glow orange in the firelight, her skin is flushed—and how did her neck get to be so long and muscled? She looks like . . . a cheetah.

Alison realizes that this is it. The moment. She is about to learn why they were asked here.

"Where is your bathroom?" She asks suddenly.

Startled, Linda coughs, licks her lips. A small smile arranges itself. She points to the stairs.

"Second door on the left."

In the kitchen, Edward drops the plates on the counter. For a moment, he is disoriented enough to mistake the sound for a flying object and he ducks. His brain stays where it was, though, and the room doubles. He blinks hard. When his vision is restored, the face of Harlan looms in his.

"I got a lot of good friends," Harlan says.

"Not me," Edward replies. He's trying to be funny, but suddenly this

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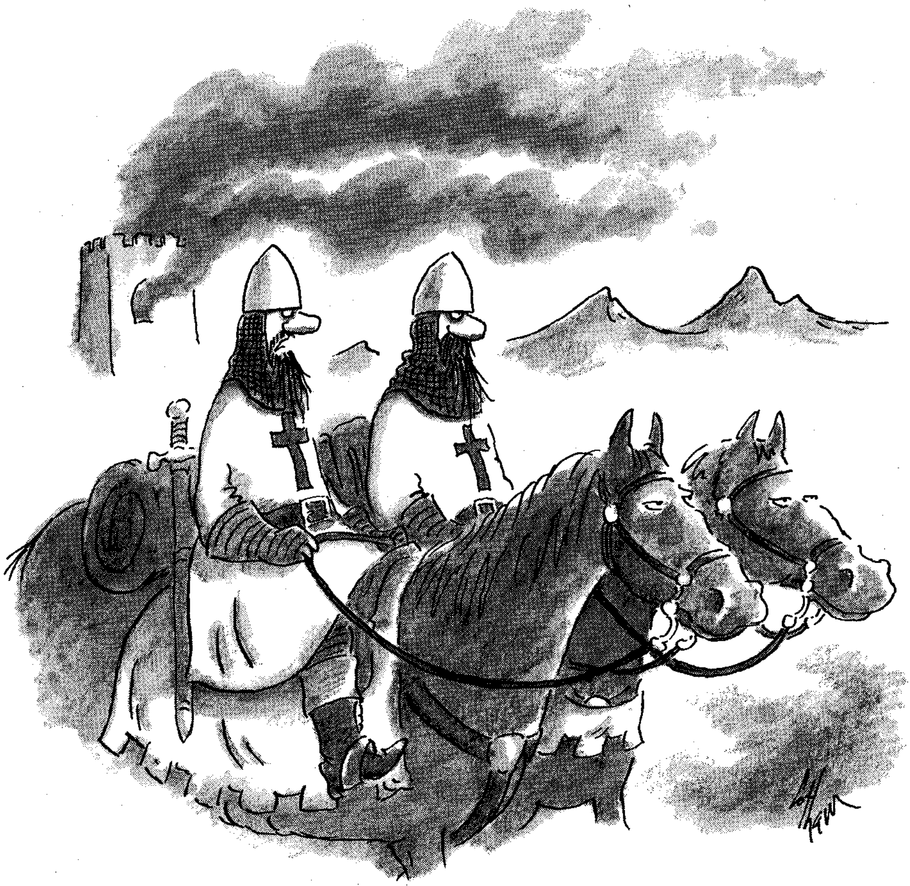

"Why did you become a crusader? You don't even go to church."

• •

doesn't seem funny at all. Perhaps because it is true.

"People in law enforcement, people in the courts," the judge goes on, ignoring the interruption. "One particular friend of mine is located in Cambridge, Mass."

"Never heard of it." Harlan is very close, leaning right over him, giving off an odor. It's the smell of mentholated salve. Has he got arthritis? Edward feels sorry for the older man, sorry for the life he's leading here on the lake, in the house, with the wife. He's sorry for having come to dinner. The fajitas are a bitter ball inside him.

"Sure you have. You've been there."

"Have I?" says Edward.

"Yes, you have. You were there between the years of 1981 and 1987. You went to college there. Remember that?"

"Sheesh," Edward tells him. "I sure don't know. Do you think I could help myself to a glass of water?" Was it really that long ago? He still has dreams about college, in which important mail is waiting for him in his campus mailbox and he can't remember the combination.

Harlan moves even closer. "You had yourself a little business there, didn't you, Eddie?"

"I was an English major."

"You were in sales and distribution."

"Nah."

"Unfortunately, your little business came to the attention of the Harvard administration. You were spared prosecution in exchange for your permanent absence from the campus. After that, you got yourself enrolled at Tufts and slunk out of there a couple years later. Is this refreshing your memory?"

"You bet it's refreshing. I don't even need that water anymore."

Harlan attempts a grin, but the corners of his mouth don't seem to be coöperating. "Keep cracking those jokes, pothead," he whispers, and the whispers clatter around the gleaming, disinfected kitchen. Behind Harlan, on the counter, Edward spies the takeout boxes from Taco Treat. "Seems that your records with the agency lacked this important information. I took the liberty of updating them for you."

"The agency?"

"The adoption agency."

Something is welling up inside Edward, something acid and explosive, first in his churning stomach, then in his esophagus, then in his throat. How dare this man judge me? he thinks—but then again, that's what judges do. They make judgments! And then it's out of him and all over the room: hot laughter, cracking the air. *Judgments!* He falls against the counter, tears pouring from his eyes. Harlan has taken a step back. He's put on his workaday face, the one he must wear as he pretends to listen carefully to all the evidence. Edward is gasping for breath.

"What the hell?" Harlan says.

Edward pounds the counter, hurting his hand. It feels great! He can't seem to speak, but what would he say? The picnic, the Breeces, this house, it's all so fucking funny!

But Harlan doesn't seem to get it, and he doesn't seem to like not getting it. He sets himself in a bearish crouch, and his lip curls under, and the fuzzy panhandle rears back. Yikes!

Edward finds himself on the floor, his legs splayed on the terra-cotta quarry tile, his back against the cabinets. Hey, how'd he get down here? The cabinets are light blue, with red lizards stencilled on them. The whole right side of his face seems to be throbbing, yet giggles are still coming out of him, like hiccups, involuntary and annoying. Harlan has cured Edward's indecision. There will be no adoption.

"You son of a bitch," Edward hears. And then he is yanked to his feet and flung through the kitchen door.

"You can find your own coat, asshole," shouts the judge.

Alison's feet are silent in the carpeted hallway. It's different up here; the walls are bare. When she shows a house, the upstairs hallways are always like this: hollow-core doors, shag carpeting, a life-swallowing softness. This is where she loses the buyer, right here, as her enthusiasm leaves her.

If only enthusiasm meant anything

to the State of New York. If only the sprawl and scatter of lived life were worth anything: then their house, their *home,* would be all the application they needed. But it was all too easy to see it through the eyes of the agency. The basement full of nail-riddled scrap lumber. The tangle of extension cords behind the sofa. The champagne stain on the living-room ceiling. All of it screaming "unfit."

But this! Alison cannot compete with this. A blameless, immaculate hallway, erased of all evidence. As if in cahoots with her heart, her bladder grows heavier.

The second door on the left. There it is, the only one open. A dim light shines from inside. She can hear voices in the kitchen, Harlan's and Edward's, exchanging confidences. It's so easy for men, she thinks, so hard for women. Men of any class have football and fishing to discuss; women have nothing. Or worse, they have children. Or worse still, no children.

She enters the bathroom and sees a bed. Obviously, she's made a mistake. She peeks out into the hall: second door on the left. No, it was no mistake. She's exactly where Linda wants her. The bedroom walls are painted bright-blue and -red, and there is a small desk with a colorful computer on it, and there's a boom box and shelves stacked with comic books and horror novels. The wallpaper is patterned with cartoon characters. There's a Buffalo Bills throw rug.

Instinct tells her to leave immediately, to grab Edward's arm and yank him out of the house. But she still has to pee. She spins and walks stiffly into the hall. She tries each door until she finds the bathroom, a dimly lit fun house of globe lights and gilt mirrors.

Then she happens to glance down the stairs and sees the back of Linda's head, the tight, ugly coif, and she changes her mind.

She goes back into the boy's room. There is a Knicks trash can in the corner by the desk. She pulls it out a little and looks down into it, at the pale, blurred oval at the bottom, her face.

Can she do it? That is, physically? There is only one way to find out. It was hot enough today for her not to have worn panty hose, and that makes doing it easier.

Crouched over the can, she is amazed at the loudness of it, like rain on a corrugated tin roof.

He's drunk, she drives. They aren't fighting; that will happen later. What they're doing now is thinking. Alison is thinking, To hell with adoption. Give me the drugs. If I get pregnant with eight babies, they can kill six. It's worth it to me. I will populate the world with bold, honest, sloppy people like myself. And if Edward can't deliver, I will use another man's sperm, from a lab. She is amazed that she can remember the doctor's phone number: if she had to, she could pull over at a convenience store and leave a message with the answering service. She feels fecund and powerful and reckless and correct in everything. Every thought is gilded, and sharp as a dagger.

Edward is having a fantasy. He and Alison have gone back to college. They live in a dorm, with roommates who never go out: for Ed, a brooding linguist who always leaves sweaty towels lying around; for Alison, an angry feminist with tangled hair. How hard it is to be together, and how sweet. They meet in dark and lonely places for whispered conversations and for sex: an abandoned carrel in the engineering library, the woods behind the physical plant, a supply closet in the business school. They talk about what it will be like someday when they're married and have a house of their own: a place all to themselves, where they'll never be bothered by other people. They'll make love in every room. They'll confess their deepest secrets, or, better yet, they won't have any.

Edward is asleep when they get home. Poor Edward, lolling half-conscious in the passenger seat, reminds Alison of a mannequin. No, a dummy: a marriage test dummy, with a heart-shaped target on his chest where he keeps getting pounded. She unbuckles his seat belt and shakes him, but he refuses to wake. All he will do is quietly moan. So she leaves him there, in the car. Later on, showered, cold-creamed, nightgowned, she lies in their bed not sleeping, her fingers on her belly, waiting for the sound of the door. ◆

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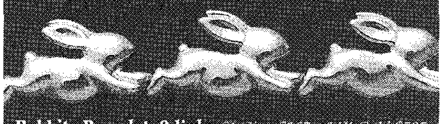

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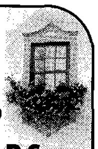

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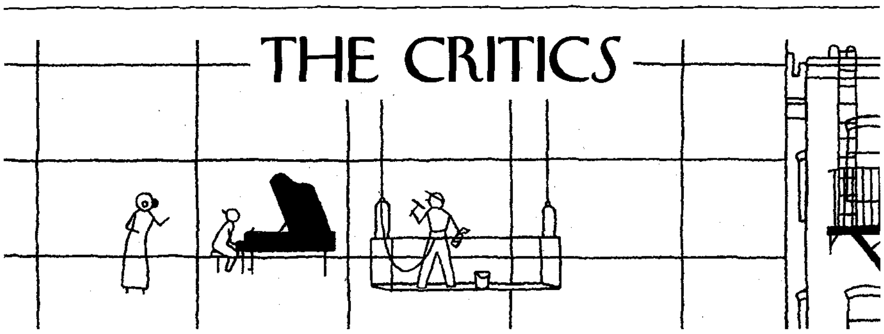


BOOKS

WHAT'S COOKING?

Two new books tell us how the restaurant got its start.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

A restaurant is a place where you go to eat. You usually arrive in the early afternoon or the middle of the evening, and you are taken to a table of your own in a room, usually on the ground floor of a big city building, that has been leased by a cook and made to look like a dining room. There are plush chairs and benches, and often mirrors. Someone whose job it is to act as a professional go-between, and who is often dressed in a parody of what people wear when they go to a fancy event, brings you a card that lists the things the cook is ready to cook, and how much it will cost to get him to cook them for you. You study this card—usually a one-page list with decorations, or a leather pseudo-book—and say what you'll have, and then the go-between goes into another room, a kitchen, which you can't see or hear or probably even smell. After a wait, he brings you the food you asked for. Very often, you start with soup and then have grilled or roasted meat, and then a sweet, almost always something made with sugar, pudding or cake, rather than a plain piece of fruit. You are expected to have tea or coffee afterward, and then a bill is brought to your table. Prices are never mentioned out loud, and you pay whatever the card said you would. Although your table may be right next to another table, you're not expected to talk to the people at that table unless you know them already. The place isn't a whorehouse or anything like it, but often you take someone there because you would like to have sex with that person afterward, and sometimes you do, although, if you get to do it after lunch or dinner, you go and do it somewhere else.

Two new books, Rebecca L. Spang's "The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture" (Harvard; $35) and Amy B. Trubek's "Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession" (Pennsylvania; $24.95), make the point that essentially all the details of this setup, which by now seems as normal as eating itself, and can be found in more or less the same form from Sydney to San Francisco, were, from soup to sex—waiters, menus, tables, mirrors, closed kitchen, seduction and silences, even the little table in the corner, *tout compris*—thought up in Paris during a twenty-five-year period right before the French Revolution. When you consider that eating is one of the few things that people did even before they were people, it seems strange that restaurants should be so recent, but it seems that they are—as though it turned out that having sex in beds had been discovered one winter in Berlin in 1857, and then word got around.

There were places where you could go and pay for a meal before there were restaurants, of course: the tavern, the cookshop, the inn, the table d'hôte, the *traiteur,* or cook-caterer. But the restaurant, with its special rituals and its particular look, began at one time and in one place. Whether it arose for one reason or many is a subject you can make a meal of, and these two new histories do, complementing each other without being complimentary. Although Trubek makes a slightly surly nod in Spang's direction, the two books are as different as can be. A new-style historian, Spang works from the outside in: ideas and social tropes come first—"The confluence of aesthetic and physical taste" is transformed "from vague metaphor into direct causality by materialist thinking," she writes—and then you eat it. The restaurant as a social institution is the mover, and French cooking is the thing moved. Trubek writes old-style history, from the inside out. A trained cook, who teaches at the New England Culinary Institute, she sees the world the way cooks do. The kitchen is the center of the universe, and everything else is just décor. You come across this divide in restaurants themselves. The boys in the kitchen think the waiters are just a bunch of fancy-pants mannequins, while the boys in the front room are sure that it's the sizzle, not the steak, that keeps the people coming in. Spang, like most first-rate modern scholars, is a straight sizzlist; people would eat anything if they thought it served their interest and helped hide the ugly truths about Power. Steakists like Trubek believe that cooks serve good food, and if it happens to get eaten by rich folks, what can you do?

Spang has written an ambitious, thought-changing book. Until now, most restaurant history was pop history, filled with canned "Eureka!" moments and arch legend-making. ("The great chef Dunand found himself after the battle with nothing but crayfish, chicken, some eggs, and a couple of tomatoes. What, he wondered, could he make from such a motley bunch of ingredients? A moment's thought, a minute's chopping, and an hour later, on the Emperor's table, Chicken Marengo was born," etc.) As Spang points out, most books tell the same story of the restaurant's first steps: After the Revolution, the cooks of the French aristocrats were out of work, since they no longer had any mouths to feed. With nowhere to go but the streets, they opened cafés and started selling in public what before you could get only in private. Willy-nilly, the modern restaurant came into existence. A

NICO JESSE/THE NETHERLANDS PHOTO ARCHIVES

Dining in Paris in the early sixties at Lapérouse (above) and Le Grand Véfour. A restaurant is a public place that feels like home.

little later, a few high chefs, the great Antonin Carême among them, made up a "grammar" of French cooking; that is, they wrote down recipes. Together, the dining room on the street and the recipe book in the kitchen made a new place.

Spang proves that this is all wrong. The invention of the restaurant predates the Revolution by at least twenty years, and chefs being thrown out on the street had nothing to do with it. (The nobles' cooks were more like head butlers than like chefs in any case, and most stayed loyal to their old bosses after the fighting started.) A restaurant, it turns out, was a thing to eat before it was a place to go. *Restaurant,* appearing around 1750, was the new name for bouillon, a chicken or beef broth.

At that time, if you wanted to eat out in Paris you had to go to a table d'hôte. This was a big public table where you took what was being served, a little like a tavern or an eating house in London. As you ate, you were expected to talk and joke and kid around with the other people at the table, including the host. (You can still eat in a modernized, à la carte version of this style at a few places in Paris: Polidor, the *crémerie* on the Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, has a menu, but it has large common tables, one or two daily *plats,* and individual napkin drawers.) This could be fun, but if the guy next to you at the table d'hôte was drunk and beery you were stuck, and if you were in the mood for chicken and only veal roast was being served you were stuck, too. If you were a woman, you couldn't go at all.

People who didn't like the table d'hôtes because of the company started to say that they didn't like them because you got sick when you ate there, which may or may not have been true. As usual, though, someone was around to exploit the health scare, and, in the same spirit in which egg-white omelettes and frozen-yogurt stands appeared in New York a couple of decades ago, places appeared in Paris offering healthy broth cooked in clean kettles—*restaurants.* These met "a semi-medicinal need in a busy urban setting," Spang writes, just like a juice bar.

The soup gave its name to the shop, and the restaurant started offering a whole range of health food, in an entirely new type of place. This transformation was achieved by Spang's hero, an amazing character named Mathurin Roze de Chantoiseau. Chantoiseau was a philosophical entrepreneur of the kind who seem to have filled Paris right before the Revolution, and might even have helped keep it from happening had they been given enough room to act. He started off as a financier, with a hard-to-follow but interesting scheme to float the French debt, essentially by letting merchants of luxury goods print their own money. When nobody went for it, he put together the first almanac of artisans, inventors, and luxury merchants—the first real guidebook to the good life—and shrewdly listed himself as the first "restaurateur."

It was Chantoiseau's restaurant, on the Rue Saint-Honoré, that turned a restaurant from a place where you went to get well into a place where you went to have a good time. Chantoiseau's restaurant, and the others like it that soon clustered around the Palais-Royal, became places where you could go when you wanted to, eat what you wanted to from a limited but reasonably long list of dishes, sit at your own table with your own friends, and tell yourself you were doing it for your health. Doctors even let women go to restaurants. (Spang puts it this way: "The gendered analyses of medical science meant that the bodies found in a restaurant were far more likely to be female than those in a café or at a table d'hôte.")

One by one, all the other things we associate with restaurants—menus, uniformed waiters, mirrored walls, even the habit of leasing a ground-floor space in a big building—were established, with the end of creating a public place that felt like home, and if not your home then the home of somebody richer, with better servants. For the first time, you could go out to eat and have it your way. Spang writes:

> Some twenty years after they were first established, restaurants no longer specialized in providing delicately healthful soups to a genteelly weak-chested clientele but in catering to individual tastes. While the *traiteur* fed large groups, the restaurateur offered single servings and small, intimate tables. As Diderot noted, writing of Roze's restaurant, "Everybody eats alone there . . ." The restaurateur invited his guest to sit at his or her *own* table, to consult his or her *own* needs and desires, to concentrate on that most fleeting and difficult to universalize sense: taste.

Pretty soon, the restaurant was jazzed up by philosophy. The new restaurants were made under the influence of or, at least, attached to the talk of Rousseau's cult of nature. Jean-François Vacossin, the second restaurateur in France, promised that he would give you "Breton porridge, orange-flower-flavored rice creams, semolina, fresh eggs . . . fruits in season, preserves from the most famous manufacturers, fresh butter and cream cheese." This *nouvelle cuisine,* as it was called, was hard to define, but everybody said that the food was simpler than the old food, was good for you, and was eaten only by the best people—as *nouvelle cuisine* always is. The new cooking was better than the old cooking even before there was an old cooking for it to be better than. Voltaire—not surprisingly, given the Rousseau-like rhetoric of the restaurant—thought the whole thing was nuts, and said so. (In one of the nice extras of Spang's book, she rescues a diatribe that Voltaire wrote against the new cooking, which some academics have insisted on interpreting as an allegorical protest against communion, and shows that it was, among other things, a diatribe against the new cooking.)

Came the Revolution, and things got tricky. Although restaurants prospered, the Jacobins were suspicious of them—not because they were linked to the old kind of ostentation but because they were linked to the wrong kind of simplicity, had a tang of Petit Trianon fresh-butter-and-cheese "Let 'em eat cake"-ism about them. The Revolution encouraged *grands couverts,* instead—the table d'hôtes of the Reign of Terror, where people sat at long tables, sharing the food and telling each other loudly what a good time we are having, citizen!

With the Restoration, the restaurant got a new life, as the bourgeois palace par excellence. It passed for good, Spang argues, from the complicated, "semi-public" space that it had been before the Revolution to the "semi-private" space that it has been since. Spang admits that this doesn't sound like much of a distinction, but she insists that it matters, and if you follow her story you can see her point. The restaurant in nineteenth-century Paris was a place where you seemed to be having a public experience in a public place, while in fact you were having a private, anonymous one. "Restaurants were places of daydream and fantasy," Spang writes. You were in society without being social.

Spang's book is an example of the new "niche" history, and, like the best of such books, it is rich in weird data, unsung heroes, and bizarre true stories about the making of familiar things. Unfortunately, it is also an instance of what you could call the new secret-code history—history that claims that some familiar thing, like a pair of pants, that is supposed to do one thing (say, cover your legs) is really there to do another (say, show off the insecure double nature of bourgeois masculinity). The trouble with this kind of reading—and one of the more obvious banalities of social constructionism, or sizzlism, in its pure form—is that it vastly underestimates the difficulty of doing things, as opposed to thinking about them. It implies that ideas are hard, while pants (or soup) are easy. In fact, it is as hard to make good chicken soup as it is to make a reason that it is good for you, and the technical history of cooking, which Spang slights—all those chefs coming up with their gee-whiz ideas for *plats*—is, after all, not a tourist trap for historians but a necessary subject.

The academic insistence that things that look obvious are coded makes Spang break out in a rash of scare quotes on nearly every page. In a passage that the publisher likes enough to put on the back of the dust jacket, Spang writes, "In the first decades of the nineteenth century, American and especially British visitors identified restaurants as particularly 'French.' . . . If these observers were to penetrate the mysteries of 'Frenchness' . . . restaurants offered as good a starting point as anywhere else . . . a bit of 'daily' French life to which travelers had easy access." But American and British travellers identified restaurants as particularly French because they were. And what, exactly, is problematic about "daily"? In any case, all those travellers weren't succumbing to an ideological trope when they said that you ate differently in France than you did in England. They were experiencing a fact. When they went to a restaurant, they were not experiencing the "Frenchness" of "daily" "French" life. They were just experiencing the Frenchness of daily French life.

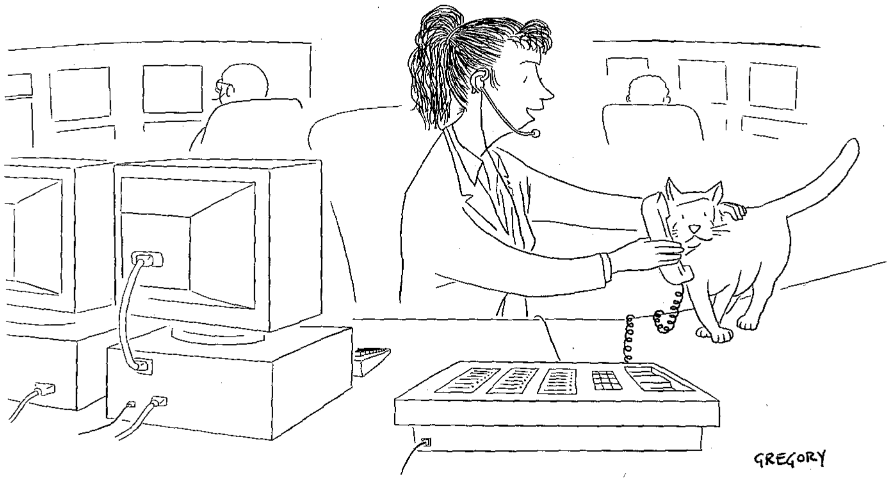
Fortunately, Amy B. Trubek's "Haute Cuisine: How the French Invented the Culinary Profession" lies near at hand. It lacks Spang's brilliance and originality, but it makes at least one leap that Spang doesn't—the leap from bouillon to stock. Not only did *restaurants* become restaurants; they also became stocks, and the use of stocks, as Trubek points out, is what divides French cooking from all other kinds. You could put some *restaurant* in a pan, cook it down, and add something else, and you would have a dish that tasted both like the thing you cooked and like something else. (This is different from putting a sauce on a pasta, or adding a chutney to a curry, where the idea is that the main thing and the sauce aren't alike.) This seems obvious once you think of it, but, once it was thought of, the range of fine shadings became so big that by the eighteen-twenties French cooking had that grammar, in the sense that each thing related to other things.

Grammars are easier to teach than accents, as every language instructor at Berlitz knows, and because French cooking had a grammar, within fifty years it was the only kind of cooking rich people wanted. Trubek is concerned mainly with why and how French cooking got so elaborate and so popular that, even in places like London, where nobody much trusted the French, all the fancy cooking was done in the French manner. The quickest way to the Continent was to eat at a "continental" restaurant, and what one gained was not just a sensual experience but expertise in comparison. Even if you didn't like the food, you liked knowing how to talk about it.

Curiously, Trubek, having seen how strong the desire for French cooking was outside France, still concludes that it was a form of "culinary imperialism." But if "imperialism" has any meaning at all, it is that the people who are being imperialized are getting something they don't want, and in this case it was something they did want, so much that they were willing to pay people they didn't much like for it. (It is strange to see these beat-up Marxist words present in a text that in every other way demonstrates that they make no sense, as if the author of a finely wrought biography of Benjamin Franklin had been forced to say that in the end, of course, everything is explained by the fact that he was a Capricorn.) Civilization is mostly the story of how seeds, meats, and ways to cook them travel from place to place. The spread of French cooking is not an example of cultural imperialism. It is an example of culture.

Spang comes down very hard on the restaurant as a typical corner of bourgeois trickery. For her, the restaurant setup is a perfect reflection of the cheap tricks of all bourgeois society. The essence of the restaurant racket is that the diners are shut off from the hot and messy kitchen, where the real work goes on. The restaurant acts as though it were public and anyone could come in, and then hands you the check. Spang ends her book with a Daumier lithograph of a hungry man on the street staring miserably at a bunch of rich eaters inside.

Spang wants to make a larger argument about the role of the restaurant, taking issue with the German philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas. Habermas says that the rise of



"You've reached 911, and there's someone here who wants to say hello."

cafés and clubs and the like in the Enlightenment helped create "social capital"—what's sometimes called civil society—by fostering the practice of arguing in small groups over tables. Even if you were only arguing about pleasures, you were developing the habit of argument. Meal by meal and game by game and cup of coffee by cup of coffee, people got the knack of thinking for themselves. Spang suggests that the real purpose of the restaurant was to distract you from social life by putting you into a reverie about taste. Man was born to eat with his fellows, and everywhere you see him dining alone. At the ideal Habermasian table, it seems, everyone would argue about what to have, and there would be a vote on it, and everyone would emerge a better citizen. (I have eaten with Germans like that.) Robert Putnam has become famous here for making a similar point: social capital is made up of bowling leagues and glee clubs and 4-H groups, and what's lost when these groups are lost can't be made up by the semi-private realm of fast-food joints or video arcades.

Surely a better point, though, is that we build as much social capital from semi-private places as we do from public ones. There are many collegial institutions—the bowling league, the gardening club, the scout troop, the block party—that are obviously virtuous, and then there are some, like the restaurant, that may not be quite so wholesome but are benevolent all the same, in that they extend the possibilities of freedom, by letting you order what you choose. After all, the other exemplary nineteenth-century public place where you can go whenever you like but can't talk to the person beside you is a library. Our sense of liberty begins not with the freedom to argue but with the freedom not to *have* to argue—to do what we like, whenever we like to do it, without having to make an articulate case one way or another. This is why teen-agers, despite their privileges, feel so unfree. They are stuck in Habermasian society, always making the case for their pleasures.

Loneliness is not the "price" of liberty but part of the profit we take from it. The restaurant's moral glory, like that of the library and the department store—another nineteenth-century bourgeois invention—is its semi-private state, for semi-ness is the special half-tint of bourgeois societies. The bowling league has been replaced not by solitary bowling but, more decisively, by the gym, which is a classic semi-private place: on the bike you read your newspaper as you pedal in a long row of solitudes.

As with most interesting inventions of bourgeois culture, restaurant-going is a study in tensions and role-playing. To visit Le Grand Véfour on the Palais-Royal, the one restaurant of Spang's period that remains intact and has been in business continuously since Roze de Chantoiseau's day, is to instantly participate in a play that has gone on so long because its point is so unsettled. The maître d' is both servant, having to wait, and master, being allowed to choose and offer. The customer is both aristocrat-for-an-hour and anxious suitor. Even the closed kitchen, while it distances the work, increases the mystique. If the dimwitted diner doesn't know what goes on back there, it is still the case that the ultimate compliment to the savvy diner is to be invited into the kitchen.

All democratic society may or may not begin in small communities; but all civility depends on little lies. The restaurant is a classroom for what Dr. Johnson called "fictitious benevolence," and teaches its first lesson: As important as finding people you have things in common with is learning to live in pleasure alongside people with whom you don't. This may be why, though there's a new new cooking every few years, the institution of the restaurant hasn't changed much. The waiter introduces himself by name, and he may have changed his tux for an Agnès B. collarless shirt, but he still comes and goes and never mentions money. We might gag on what was served at Chantoiseau's restaurant, but, seeing the pantomime of waiters and menus and mirrors and erotic murmur, we would know at once just where we were. Home, Robert Frost wrote, is the place where, when you go there, they have to take you in. A restaurant is a place where, when you go there, they not only have to take you in but have to act as though they were glad to see you. In cities of strangers, this pretense can be very dear. ◆

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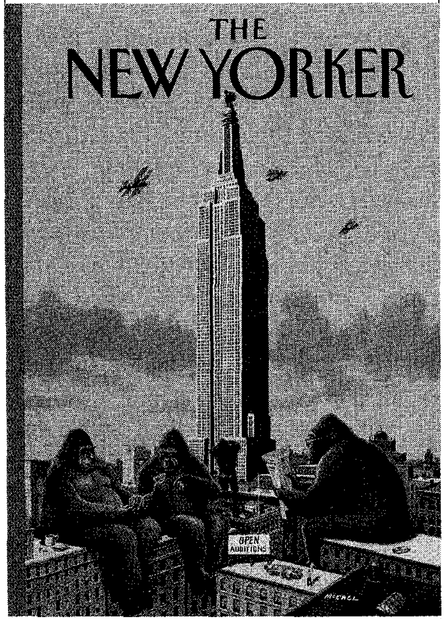

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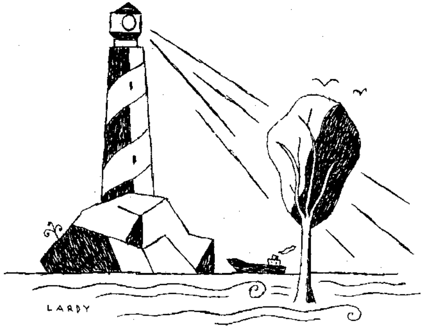
BRIEFLY NOTED

Ben, in the World, *by Doris Lessing (HarperCollins; $23).* In Lessing's 1988 novel "The Fifth Child," Ben Lovatt is different from his four siblings from the moment of his violent birth: preternaturally strong, slow to learn, prone to dangerous rages. What, then, is this child owed, and at what cost to his family? In this slightly surreal yet moving sequel, Ben is an adult, adrift in a hostile world that feels it owes him very little; children stare at him, storekeepers and employers cheat him, women hurry away. As he is treated kindly by a few and preyed upon by many—drug runners, movie people, and scientists, in turn—Lessing's unsentimental yet excruciating moral fable forces us to accept the Lovatts' dilemma as our own.

The Royal Family, *by William T. Vollmann (Viking; $40).* Just four years after producing the short-story collection cum travel book "The Atlas," Vollmann returns with another singular literary effort, this one a Brobdingnagian novel that centers on two brothers in modern-day San Francisco. Henry Tyler is a private investigator with a taste for the city's underbelly; his brother, John, is a respectable lawyer whose only concern seems to be advancement in his firm. Their differences are complicated by the fact that Henry loves John's wife, Irene, and are further complicated when Irene, pregnant and despondent, kills herself. Both brothers react to the suicide with confusion and guilt: Henry trolls the Tenderloin for the Queen of the Whores, a possibly mythical figure who controls the city's demimonde; and John retreats deeper into the adjacent Financial District, with its pecuniary rewards. As usual, Vollmann floods his scenes with torrents of prose (Melville, Dostoyevsky, Dante, and the Bible are just a few of the obvious influences), but here he never lets style outstrip substance. "The Royal Family," with its unforgettable characters (not just the human inhabitants but the city itself), is his most accomplished work to date.



Please Don't Call Me Human, *by Wang Shuo, translated from the Chinese by Howard Goldblatt (Hyperion East; $23.95).* A gang of four Beijing sports promoters—exploiting anti-foreign feeling while eagerly embracing China's new, capitalist orthodoxy—decide to develop a superhero with "uniquely Chinese characteristics." They discover a pedicab driver who has learned a mysterious martial-arts style from his ancient father, the sole surviving Boxer from the xenophobic popular uprising of 1900. But in fact the son's most "Chinese" characteristic (and his most marketable skill) proves to be his boundless capacity for humiliation. While the father is interrogated for revisionist purposes, the son is readied for international competition through escalatingly nightmarish ordeals, including castration. Much of the Joe Orton-like dialogue consists of exuberantly subverted clichés, and the author's playfulness leavens his tale's misanthropy.

Innocence, *by Jane Mendelsohn (Riverhead; $21.95).* How could Mendelsohn, whose first book was the fully imagined "I Was Amelia Earhart," have written this novel? Again, she writes in the first person, but her heroine this time around is a sorry cartoon: poor teen-age Beckett, who has moved with her father to Manhattan after her mother is killed in a car wreck. Beckett is on the verge of what used to be called menarche, and she's into blood: she sees it oozing from the icebox, poured into teacups at her new stepmother's book club. There's screaming. There's fleeing. Gotham's menacing canyons are evoked. The result is almost mesmerizingly bad, like watching outtakes from "Heathers," "Carrie," and "Rosemary's Baby."

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film, "Eddie Murphy Raw." The four comics appear, individually or in pairs, on such commercial-TV programs as "The Steve Harvey Show" and on freer-swinging cable programs like "Def Comedy Jam." But nothing in show business is quite as heady as doing standup before a big live audience. You can feel the men's extraordinary happiness as they control the shape and flow of the evening, adding music and even bits of dancing here and there. "The Original Kings of Comedy" is both the record of a great stage show and the most entertaining and fully human movie released so far this year.

Spike Lee intersperses some offstage bits into the performances (a friendly card game, some jokes about Phil Jackson's high-reared walk), but that stuff is minor: the show's the thing. During the performance, Lee has five or six cameras out front, and he flips, in the editing, from angle to angle. For my taste, the editing is a little overactive, but Lee never kills a joke, and he brings the

THE CURRENT CINEMA

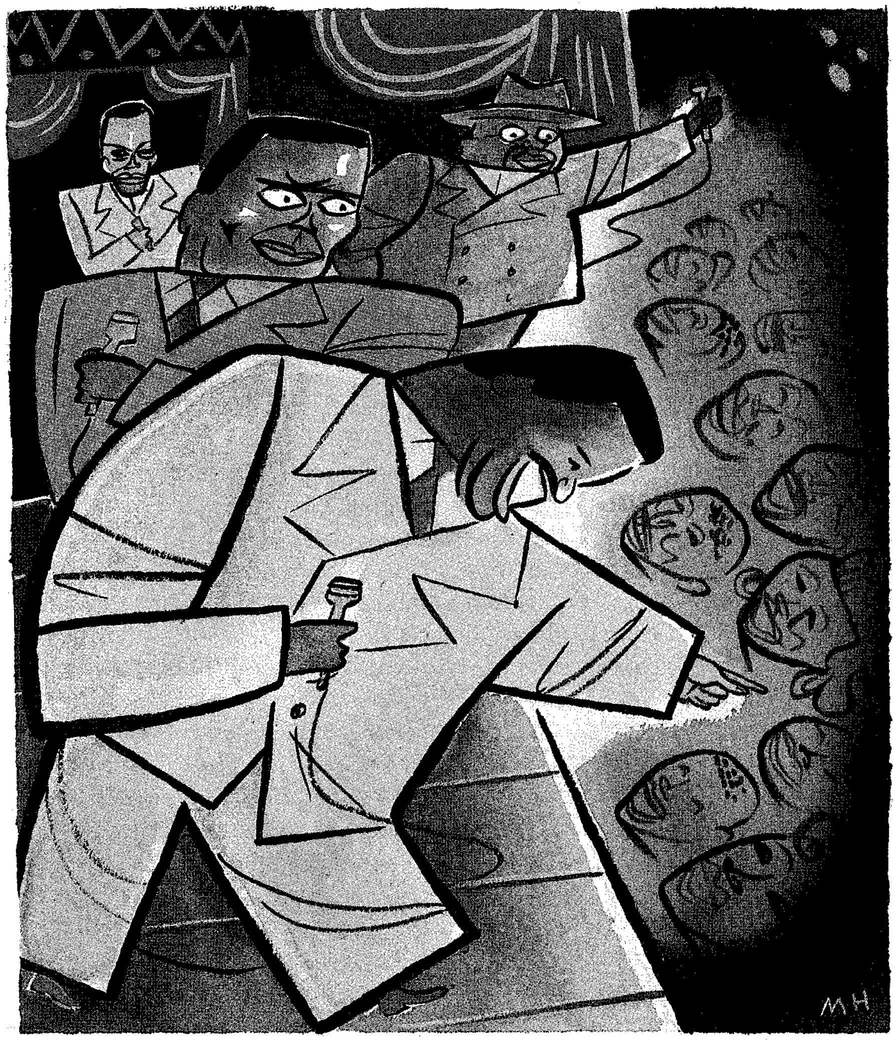
FOUR KINGS

How to make an audience happy.

BY DAVID DENBY

In one of many brilliant moments in the new performance film "The Original Kings of Comedy," Steve Harvey, a heavy hitter in a big suit, lowers the boom on rap music. "Stink-ass rappers make me sick," he announces. "Kings" was shot by Spike Lee last February in the Charlotte Coliseum, in North Carolina, before a full house. The movie is a record of a single stop in a long national tour—a celebration of entertaining the old way, before live audiences—and, whatever else it does, "Kings" offers a stunning reproof to the endless media racket in which commercialized "rage" is packaged in CDs and on TV for the suburbs. These four men—D. L. Hughley, Cedric the Entertainer, Bernie Mac, and Steve Harvey—don't have to pretend to be angry; they're standing on a stage doing what God put them on earth to do, completely in touch with an audience that loves them. The comics look to be in their forties, and they're secure enough as entertainers not to fear seeming out of it. As Harvey talks, a rhythm-and-blues classic floats out to the audience, and he smiles and says, "Charlotte, that's old school." He turns his back to the audience, like one of the Temptations, and swings his rear softly in his big suit; then he turns back. "*One* mike," he shouts. "Always one mike." A moral principle is obviously being announced: In rap, everyone has his own mike, and what for? "We can't understand what *one* of your asses is saying," Harvey roars, and then he takes off, flapping his arms wildly, running from one side of the stage to the other in romper-room rap style as he screams gibberish into the microphone, which he shoves halfway down his throat. The audience shrieks with pleasure. Steve Harvey expresses more than just love of the sweet and gentle in music; he speaks for anyone who has ever been intimidated into silence by the jeering monotony of hip-hop at its worst.

In "The Original Kings of Comedy," the humor is profane and entirely male, but, among other things, the jokes offer a kind of tender-dirty love song to women, who, Harvey insists, have been forsaken by hip-hop's indifference to romance. "Kings" is a ribald love fest. Harvey leads off the show, greeting Charlotte with a cheerful "How you-all doing with your country asses?" He does the opening riffs and returns twice to introduce the other men, who enter like champions through portals at the back of the stage. The overall tone is vaunting but friendly: it's the ironic-peacock style, very far from the adore-me, blue-silk-narcisso preening of Eddie Murphy in his 1987 performance



Steve Harvey (front), Bernie Mac, Cedric the Entertainer, and D. L. Hughley.

Charlotte audience deep into the movie. After a while, we realize that he has to do that—the material demands it. The comedy hits close to home: it's about sex and family and work, and it's about shame and humiliations too deep for ordinary people to admit. When the comics bring this stuff out, however, the audience is strong enough to laugh.

Each man fields his specialty. Harvey has his big smile, his big suit, his flattop haircut. He can be scathing in a palms-down, slightly fey style of irritated disbelief—so reminiscent, in this one respect, of Jack Benny. The next comic, D. L. Hughley, is small and querulous; he's perpetually enraged, burning with the shrill, high exasperation of the put-upon male. Restless and quick, he seizes on the indignities of life—having your mom show up at school when she's all messed up, or having so many unpaid bills that new bad references have to be *stapled* to your credit report. Hughley makes it clear that for African-Americans survival is still the issue. Blacks, he insists, don't do bungee jumping; it's too much like getting lynched. The attitude of all four comics is: Why seek trouble? It will find you soon enough, and anyone who doesn't save himself from the worst is just a fool. Comedy like this—an enormous elaboration of Falstaff's "The better part of valor is discretion"—shreds every noble gesture. In a routine about "Titanic," Harvey asks, "What black band gonna play when the ship goes down?"

Cedric the Entertainer, who comes on after Hughley, does a hilarious imitation of black people running from a mass murderer (as opposed to whites, who would be drawn by curiosity to see what the fuss was about). A big man in a hat and a sleeveless suit, Cedric breaks into insinuating little soft-bellied dance steps. When he moves—the audience goes crazy every time—he's as fluid as a snake, rolling his considerable bulk in one continuous flow. Cedric is accommodating and patient, a seemingly harmless fellow, but, of the four, he's the most detailed and ruthless in his observation of behavior. For instance, he does a bit about a drunk lighting a cigarette in front of a liquor store that comes close to heartbreak. For the wino, the manipulation of match and butt is a major drama, and we soon understand why—it's his work, the only card he can play. This kind of comedy, at its most knife-edged, can function as a higher form of truthtelling. There may be a lot of sex and body talk in "The Original Kings of Comedy," but there's little boasting. The jokes are devoted to the scandalous secrets of the bedroom and the laundry hamper—the human stain, as Philip Roth calls it, the streak of vanity or screwed-upness or sheer orneriness that makes a person real to himself and to others. Dirty in expression, the movie is clean in feeling.

MARCELLUS HALL

Many influences are at play—the old legends of black-and-blue comedy, like Redd Foxx and Moms Mabley, and the African-American church, with its ecstatic repetitions, and, of course, Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy, who showed the way in concert films. In "Richard Pryor Live in Concert" (1979) and "Richard Pryor Live on the Sunset Strip" (1982), Pryor turned performing into a struggle beteen anger and anxiety. He displayed a sensibility so delicate that everything registered on it as a potential threat. As he talked in his high-pitched voice, his free hand fingered the air like a mad harpist's or worried his nose and mustache. He was a nose-itch comedian, always on the verge of druggy crackup. Imitating African animals in "Sunset Strip," Pryor was both the hunter and the hunted, but a skit in the same movie about performing at the mercy of the Mafia made it clear that he never expected to escape the lion. Eddie Murphy, inheriting everything, displayed the shiny self-sufficiency of a comic who has had a genius like Pryor come before him. In his big hit "Eddie Murphy Raw," he offered himself as a sexual object to the audience, and then said, in effect, "You can't have me."

Perhaps no black entertainer in America will ever again be as frightened as Pryor or as eager to display his vanity as Murphy. Bernie Mac, who does the last routine in "Kings," gets his biggest laughs by insisting that he's past it in bed. Mac is tall, handsome, stentorian, and fearless, and we don't believe him for a minute, but it's a gracious admission of mortality. Elvis Mitchell, in the *Times*, pointed out Mac's resemblance to a preacher—the breathless, dropped-syllable, incantatory style rushes to a laugh as rapidly as a minister rushes to Jesus. "The Original Kings of Comedy" fills you with good feelings about the relation of life to art. For its audience, joined together in theatres, and now in movie houses, communion, holy and unholy, is clearly at hand. ♦

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THE SKY LINE

BUSY BUILDINGS

Post-iconic towers invade Times Square.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

When you try to fix an image in your head of any one of the skyscrapers that have just been built or are going up around Times Square, it doesn't hold. There isn't a single clear shape that you can remember. None of the new towers have the simple strength of the Empire State Building or the Chrysler Building or Lever House or the World Trade Center. Even the least appealing of the old skyscrapers, those that lack the iconic power of, say, the Flatiron Building or the Woolworth Building, have a certain clarity. The towers being built now aren't clear at all; they aren't intended to be. They are assemblages of parts, collages, that look different on each side, and their bottoms often bear no relation to their tops. The base of each new skyscraper is covered with electronic advertising signs (which the city's zoning laws have required since 1987 as a means of keeping the glitter of Times Square alive, long past the age when outdoor advertising was a necessary form of communication), and the buildings behind and above the clutter often seem every bit as hyperactive as the signs themselves.

Skyscrapers today are huge—bulky more than high—and yet they seem lighter than ever, in part because their shapes are so elusive. Is the new Reuters headquarters at 3 Times Square a curving object of reflective glass or a bunch of setbacks in granite? Are its windows holes in a wall of solid granite or sections of a glass wall? It all depends on what part of the building you are looking at. Viewed from Forty-second Street, the tower doesn't seem very big, since you see mainly a small light-gray section of granite, which pops out at you while a bigger mass of grayish glass behind it, the color of the sky, fades into the background. Across the street at 4 Times Square, the Condé Nast Building—home of a large law firm and sixteen magazines, including this one—looks like a round drum from one vantage point and like a tower of glass or a tower of stone from others. It is a virtual catalogue of different kinds of sheathing covering different shapes. The architect of both 3 and 4 Times Square, Bruce Fowle, of the firm Fox & Fowle, says that he put five kinds of coverings on the Condé Nast Building and went up to six on the Reuters Building, all variations of granite and patterns of glass. Kohn Pedersen Fox, the architects of the tower that is rising on the south side of Forty-second Street—which will be called 5 Times Square—decided that they wanted to express geometric patterns in glass, and the dominant feature of their building is a huge diagonal line slicing across the façade, separating a section covered in solid glass from one covered in reflective-glass stripes.

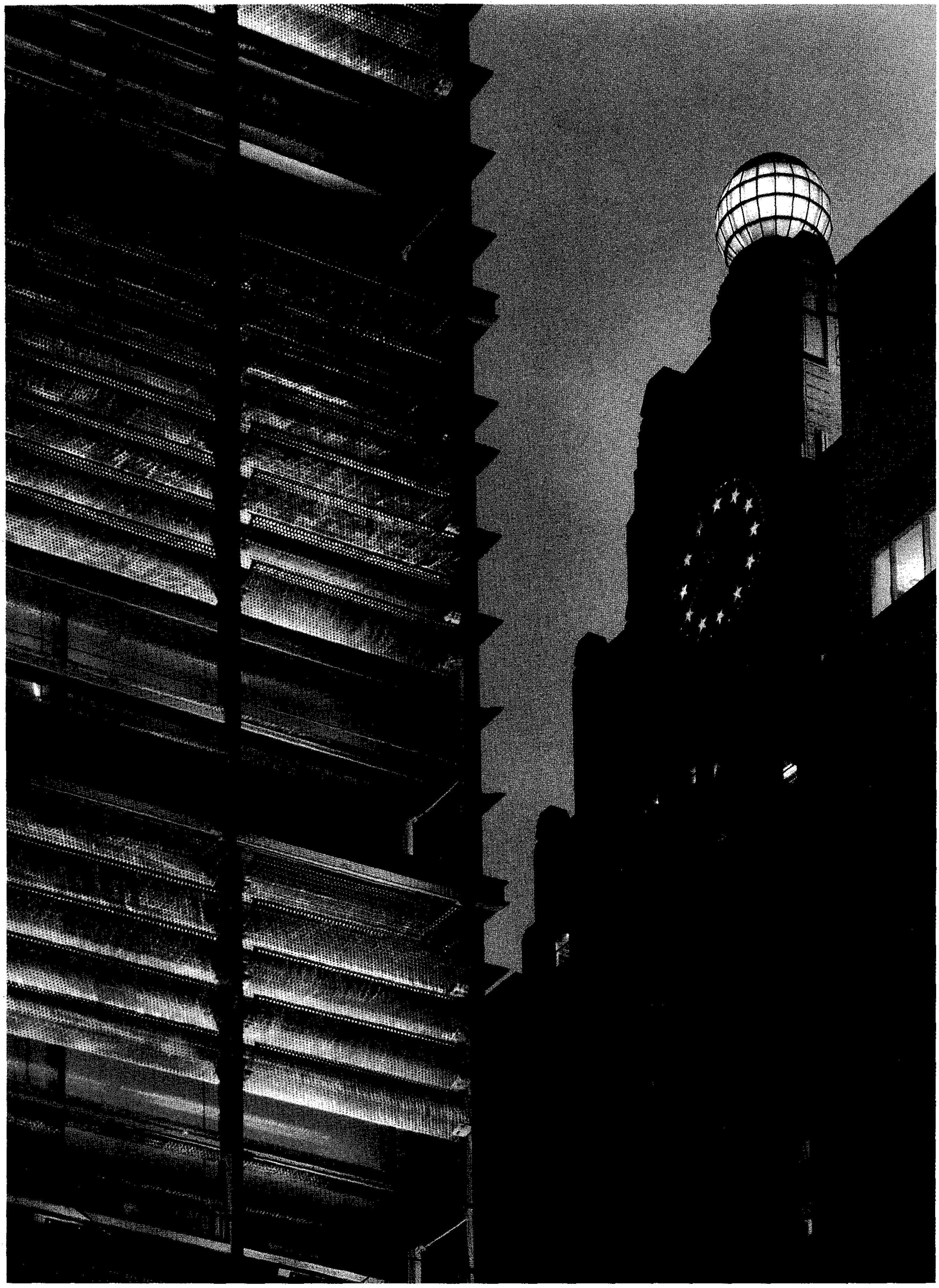
Why have architects of skyscrapers, who were for so long devoted to Platonic form—the perfect tower, standing alone—shifted their priorities? Plenty of tall buildings put up in the past were hemmed in by their neighbors, but they almost always showed a carefully ordered, formal face on whatever public sides they did have. The varying façades and fidgety, edgy forms of the new buildings are not simply a response to the visual cacophony of Times Square, since it isn't only at Times Square that you see this new kind of tower. In almost every major city in the world, restless, agitated, disconnected buildings are going up. The skyscraper has become a collection of parts.

It has been a long time since a group of new buildings in close proximity to one another in New York could be described as setting a tone for high-rise construction everywhere. But the new towers in Times Square show us, unambiguously, that the idea of the skyscraper as a pure object is dead. The new buildings have a fluid identity, and it is tempting to think of their dematerialization as neatly paralleling the shift toward cyberspace—from mechanization to electronics, from atoms to pixels. This notion is especially appealing as an explanation of why so many of the new skyscrapers have gone up in a place where media headquarters converge and the latest technologies enliven the signs. What better architectural expression of the new world could there be?

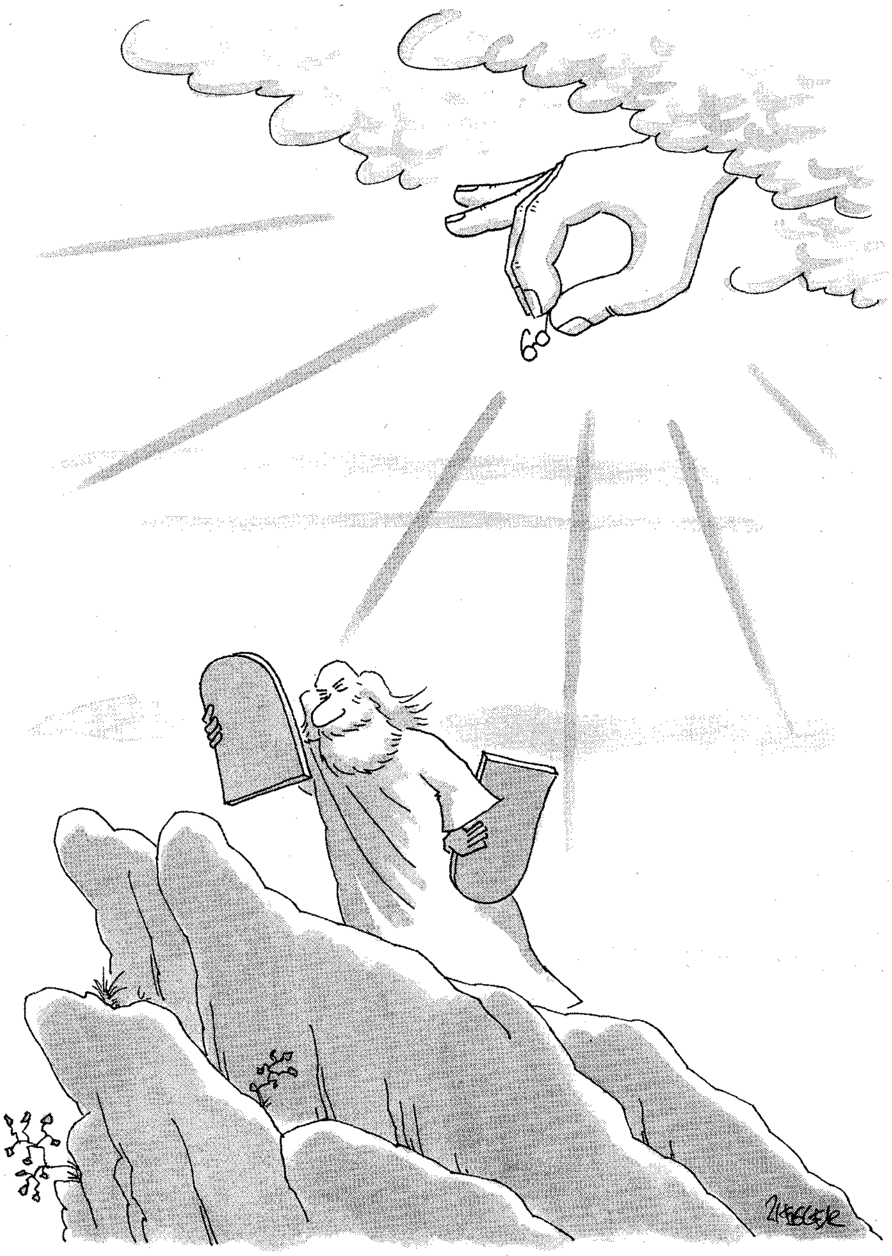
I wish we could attribute such ambitious intentions to Fox & Fowle, or to Kohn Pedersen Fox, or to Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the architects of the intersection's fourth tower, which will rise on the south side of Forty-second Street, between Broadway and Seventh Avenue. (This building, to be called the Times Square Tower, is also a sleek kit of modernist parts, with an exceptionally zestful top and a section with visible diagonal trusses.) But it is more likely that the architects were preoccupied with new and vexing practical demands. Their clients are real-estate developers, and even in the age of cyberspace developers want more actual space, and they want it in bigger chunks. Companies demand huge floors, not little rooms in the sky, which means that if you don't do something reasonably clever your building will end up looking so bulky that it will make those nineteen-sixties boxes on Sixth Avenue seem cute and friendly.

The skyscrapers that everyone seems to love, like the Woolworth Building and the Chrysler Building, are slender towers. Even the G.E. Building, at Rockefeller Center, is a fairly narrow slab, magnificently sculpted; 40 Wall Street is thin, and 570 Lexington Avenue is a veritable spindle. Once, the challenge of skyscraper design was to express height gracefully. ("The skyscraper must be tall, every inch of it tall," Louis Sullivan admonished.) But designing a skyscraper today isn't all that different from designing a convention center. In both cases, the problem is in figuring out how to make the thing look less fat, less like a behemoth, and one way to do that is to break the enormous mass into parts.

It's no accident that the best new building in Times Square is the smallest one, a ten-story building on the north side of Forty-second Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. It opened in June, and is intended to provide re-



At night, the New 42nd Street Studios is a piece of shimmering modernism juxtaposed with the bulky, collage-like Reuters Building, far right, and the Paramount Building, which was built in the nineteen-twenties. Photograph by Robert Polidori.



hearsal space for performing-arts groups as well as offices and a ninety-nine-seat black-box theatre. Designed by the firm of Platt Byard Dovell, it is a simple glass tower with stainless-steel *brise-soleils*, or sun grilles, covering the south-facing façade. The grilles create a splendid texture, and the building manages to appear pristine without being prissy, which is no small achievement amid the cheap, multiplex-theatre glitz that has taken over most of the rest of the block. At night, thanks to a brilliant computerized scheme by the lighting designer Anne Militello, the façade of the building literally becomes a performance. It glows, it flashes, it changes from red to blue and then to yellow, orange, and green. Militello's design delivers no stock quotes or news; it exists to advertise nothing except the building itself, which it does in delicious silence. The lights do not cover up the architecture, like the commercial billboards up and down the rest of the street; they are completely in tune with the structure of which they are a part. They make it dance.

In 1981, when the state and the city's urban-renewal plan for Times Square was first announced, the centerpiece was to have been four towers by Philip Johnson and John Burgee that would have made a rather monstrous matched set. Each of them had a granite front that appeared to be pasted onto a huge mass that was topped by a glass mansard roof. There were big arches at the bases of the buildings, which were to have risen pretty much straight up, with almost no setbacks. They would have appeared even bulkier than the towers that are now being built—at once frilly and grotesquely large, sort of like elephants in tutus. The Johnson buildings were postmodernism's revenge, and it is not surprising that almost no one had a good word to say about them. A slow market for office space and political opposition to the redevelopment plan—and not just the awfulness of the design—did the buildings in, but the difference between the Johnson project and what has gone up in its place shows what enormous changes have occurred in the mainstream of commercial architecture in less than twenty years.

At one point in the early nineties, Johnson and Burgee were sent back for another try, and they came up with a bizarre proposal for four towers that were identical in size to the first group, but this time each one was sheathed in a different architectural garment. One was vaguely in the style that was then coming to be called Deconstructivist, with all kinds of disparate parts; another was a variant on the mansard-roofed postmodernism of the first scheme; and still another had a kind of sleek, abstracted modernism to it. Nothing in the revised design seemed to have much to do with the site itself. There was something almost desperate about the proposal, but by throwing everything into the pot the architects inadvertently hit on the beginnings of the kit-of-parts aesthetic that now holds sway.

If there's anything that raises the level of the new Times Square skyscrapers and makes their designs more than mere entertainment, it's the way that their architects have tried to relate the buildings to their surroundings. The Condé Nast Building, which occupies one of the busiest corners in the world, is a dynamic, zestful presence. On the other hand, sometimes architects try too hard to justify the complicated, inconsistent tone of their work as a reflection of the complicated, inconsistent tone of the cityscape. Bruce Fowle, for example, explained the design of the Condé Nast

Building to me by saying that he put more granite on the east side, which faces the more formal and proper neighborhood closer to Bryant Park and Fifth Avenue, and more glass on the Times Square side because it is flashier. As for 3 Times Square, the Reuters Building, Fowle said that he wanted to give it a more corporate look from the north, and tie it into Times Square's glitter from the south, where he placed a curvilinear glass façade intersected by a stainless-steel wedge. "The struggle was how do you create corporate dignity and fit into the razzle-dazzle at the same time?" he said. But his solution—"We sliced it here, we sliced another plane there"—yielded a building that sometimes seems like a bunch of unintegrated pieces.

The slice-and-dice process is handsomely documented in an exhibition that opened in June at the Skyscraper Museum, on the ground floor of 110 Maiden Lane, in lower Manhattan. The show traces the development of the Times Square towers that have already been built or are going up as well as two others, the Westin Hotel, by Arquitectonica (to be completed in the fall of 2002), and a tower to rise over the Port Authority Bus Terminal, by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. There are more than a dozen models of each building, versions that were discarded because they did not please either the architects, the developers, or the officials of the 42nd Street Development Project. All the little models lined up on shelves demonstrate one of the raw truths of architecture: there are almost always multiple solutions to a project, and the finished building is usually a product of somewhat arbitrary options. The explanations given by even the most gifted architects for their choices are often not apparent to people looking at the completed buildings. William Pedersen explained the diagonal line on the front of 5 Times Square as an attempt to echo the diagonal line of Broadway. "The geometries of the building came from the geometry of Broadway and Seventh Avenue," he said to me. "The building is prismatic." But will pedestrians ever see the building's façade as a reflection of the street plan? And will they perceive the graceful curve of the Reuters Building as a gesture toward the intersection of Broadway and Forty-second Street, and the granite section on the north side as a statement of corporate dignity inserted into the glitz? The shapes may appear as a lot of architectural noise, trying to be heard above the visual din of all those signs.

Perhaps the purest new building in Times Square is the small tower of black glass designed in the early nineties by Mayers & Schiff and Costas Kondylis for the Renaissance Hotel, just north of Forty-seventh Street. It was intended as little more than a backdrop for signs. The former Times Tower, at 1 Times Square, the tiny triangle in the middle of the intersection of Broadway and Seventh Avenue, at the south end of the square, has become literally a framework for signs, hardly a real building at all. Except for the ground-level store, there is virtually nothing functional inside. And maybe it's perfectly fine for these buildings to be perceived as benign blurs. Maybe that's the best way, right now, to deal with skyscrapers in contemporary cities, which are themselves blurs of rapidly changing images.

The post-iconic skyscraper—the skyscraper that isn't so much a thing as a collection of things—isn't easy to love, but it does evoke a curiously traditional idea, one worth holding on to, which is that the concept of the city is more important than an individual building. Every one of the new buildings has been designed as a piece of a big, messy whole. The new towers both assert themselves within this environment and step back from it. Their shapes can't be separated from their surroundings. The signs, in the end, pull the new Times Square together, as the softer, whiter lights of another generation pulled the old Times Square together.

I'm not ready to relinquish the notion of the tall building as an icon. But putting up more such structures may make little sense in New York today. The Empire State Building remains a true spire nearly seventy years after it was finished, mostly because of the eccentricities of the neighborhood. Few other great towers have been so lucky. More often, their exquisitely crafted shapes have been rendered invisible by the rampant growth of the city around them. Towers want to be alone. The new, post-iconic skyscraper loves crowds. ♦

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MUSICAL EVENTS

END-OF-THE-WORLD NEWS

The unbroken spell of Bayreuth.

BY ALEX ROSS

The Richard Wagner festival, which holds sway over the Bavarian town of Bayreuth every summer, is still a fairly big deal in Germany. The newspapers give almost daily updates on the never-ending Wagner controversy. Last spring, preparations for a new production of the "Ring of the Nibelung" coincided with yet another uproar over the future direction of the festival, which various members of the Wagner family have operated since 1876. The current head, Wolfgang Wagner, is eighty, and the committee that oversees him is scheduled to elect his successor in October. Wolfgang wants his wife to take over when he is gone; other relatives disagree. With their rituals, scandals, and feuds, the Wagners are, in a way, the royal family of Germany, except that this monarchy still has something significant to do.

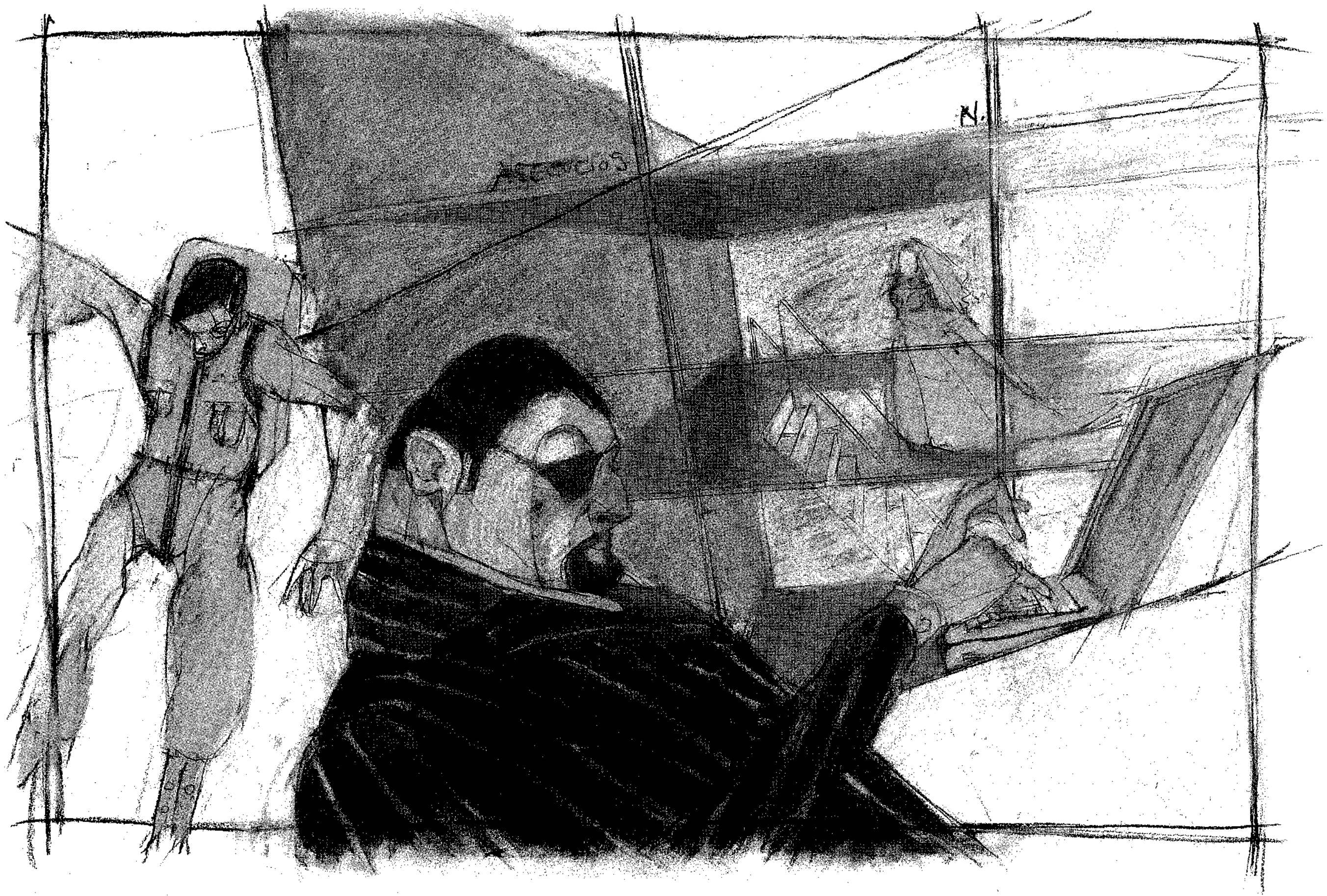
Wolfgang is the composer's grandson. The fact that Bayreuth is governed by the grandson of a man born in 1813 may explain the dreamlike atmosphere of the place, in which the nineteenth century, the century of the religion of art, springs eternal. Bayreuth hypnotizes you with its seriousness, and the experience is more liberating than confining. It invites you to stop and think, to reject biases and first impressions, to stare into the heart of a single work. No one goes to Bayreuth simply to be seen; if you're giving Wagner a week of your life, you have to be looking for something more. During the day, in cafés, operagoers debate minor points of the libretto. "Parsifal" vocal scores are stacked on the sidewalks outside the bookstores. At night, a young Italian conductor drums his tempos for Siegfried's Funeral Music on a table at the Hotel Bayerischer Hof restaurant. Bayreuth is a cult, but it is not a cult of Wagner per se. It is a cult of opera, which Wagner facilitated by creating a work so seductively labyrinthine that a community of listeners can disappear into it for a week.

Gods and dwarfs drive the action, but their emotions are excruciatingly human. In Act II of "Die Walküre," for example, Wotan discovers the limits of his power, and he suffers mightily. "If it is presented as I require," Wagner wrote of the scene, "it is bound to produce a sense of shock beyond anything previously experienced." It is impossible to guess how Wagner might have reacted to the new Bayreuth staging, which was directed by Jürgen Flimm and designed by the painter Erich Wonder, but the shock was considerable. Wotan became, as in many modern productions, a capitalist—in this case a late-twentieth-century "master of the universe," in a three-piece suit. At the beginning of the act, he straddled a desk, with a paper shredder to his left and a water cooler to his right. The audience tittered at the contemporary details, then went silent as Alan Titus showed the god in emotional free-fall—a man "sinking into a feeling of powerlessness," in Wagner's phrase. Titus had to work at producing stentorian, godlike tones, but he built the character through a sequence of contrasts, escalating from an eerily distinct sotto voce to climaxes of inchoate rage. By the end, as he jumped up on the desk to deliver his sardonic blessing of the Nibelung dwarfs, bequeathing to them the "empty glory of the gods," he had achieved the kind of transparency that every actor seeks: he was the picture of shattered pride.

Bayreuth is able to draw out such performances because it demands weeks of rehearsal. Singers can't jet in and jet out. Every scene in this "Ring" had been rehearsed to within an inch of its life. Curiously, though, the conception behind it had the look of a rush job. Some scenes were fleshed out beautifully: not only Wotan's office in "Die Walküre" but also the dwarfs' sweatshop in "Rheingold" and the Gibichungs' glass-and-steel headquarters in "Götterdämmerung." I went to bed afraid of Wonder's dragon, a nightmare of human figures writhing under gelatinous skin. Other scenes, however, lacked a sense of place. Valhalla was a nondescript cylinder wrapped in scaffolding, and Hunding's hut may or may not have been situated on a colonial veldt. Wonder often resorted to what this month's *Opera News* identifies as the latest cliché of opera direction—the depositing of stylish furniture in the middle of nowhere. The production felt unfinished, and the flurry of painted curtains during the "Götterdämmerung" apocalypse suggested that in the end it had simply run out of money.

The singing in this cycle, too, was not what it might have been. The casting didn't take full advantage of the acoustics of the Festspielhaus, which frees singers from the domination of the orchestra. This is, ironically, one house where "Wagnerian" voices aren't needed. Why, then, were Wolfgang Schmidt and Gabriele Schnaut cast as Siegfried and Brünnhilde? They both sing as their names sound; their chief selling point is their brute strength. Schnaut, at least, conveys emotion even when she howls a quarter tone flat. Schmidt simply shouts, and certain of his notes make you want to duck. Act III of "Siegfried" was altogether hellish. (It was a relief to pick up a glorious new disk of "Siegfried" and "Tristan" duets, on EMI, with Placido Domingo sounding happily Teutonic and Deborah Voigt finding a new vein of passion.) The love duets of "Die Walküre" were better. Domingo repeated his well-loved turn as Siegmund, and Cheryl Studer—filling in for Waltraud Meier on a few hours' notice—sang Sieglinde with considerable grace.

In truth, the Bayreuth cast suffered in comparison with the all-star team that the Met fielded in the cycle last spring. But this "Ring" had more impact—largely because the singers threw themselves into their roles, replacing stock gestures with cinematic naturalism. In the dungeons-and-dragons setting at the Met, James Morris's Wotan never let go of his spear or his poise, whereas Titus—as that desperate C.E.O. who tears around in search of a shredded fax from Nibelheim—was all raw nerves. Several others at Bayreuth acted with uncommon energy. Kim Begley, as Loge, sang and danced circles around the gods, marking out his freedom from their neurotic needs. Günter von Kannen's Alberich, a likable sadist, had the righteous anger of the wronged. And John Tomlinson made a towering wreck of Hagen, hinting that he was not only Alberich's son but also Wotan's alter ego.



Wotan as a desperate "master of the universe" in an energetic, postmodern "Ring" set in the middle of nowhere.

N. ASCENCIOS

Giuseppe Sinopoli was the conductor, and he seemed to be trying to match the modernity of Wonder's settings with an angular account of the score. Wotan put Brünnhilde to sleep with a rapid, emotionally repressed cello line; the Valkyrie awakened in "Siegfried" to detached chords in the brass; throughout, winds cut pungently across the strings while the lower brass growled. Such sounds were a shock after the aural sauna of James Levine's "Ring" at the Met. They might have been more effective if Sinopoli's cues had been more precise. His attempt to play up the silences during Brünnhilde's awakening, for example, was foiled when some of the brass came in about a beat early.

When Bayreuth celebrates its hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary next year, its future will have been decided. One way forward is that of Nike Wagner, Wolfgang's niece, whose prospectus for the festival calls for an expansion of its repertory and a revision of its philosophy. With Nike in charge, Wagner's operas would be presented under open-ended thematic categories such as "Sound Room and Room Sound" and "Medieval and Modern"; operas by other composers would be produced, new works performed, symposiums organized; artists would be invited to prepare "installations, projects, topographical evocations, acoustical experiments." This seems like the wrong way to go. Bayreuth should not become another Salzburg, a smorgasbord of conceptual productions and faddish happenings, with Wagner somewhere in the middle.

And yet Bayreuth does need a fresh face at the helm. Wolfgang, the scion of a household where Hitler was fondly greeted as "Uncle Wolf," has never come to terms with his family's enthusiasm for the Nazis. In this year's program book, Dieter David Scholz tries, in various ways, to play down the composer's anti-Semitism, claiming, for example, that the bigotry of Wagner's final years really emanated from his wife, Cosima. (The early essay "Jewishness in Music," Scholz claims, was reprinted at Cosima's insistence. The problem with this rationalization is that in her diaries Cosima expressed misgivings about the publication.) Bitterness toward Wagner might subside if the partisans of Bayreuth were ever to give an honest account of the founder's views.

Wagner: Decision 2000 is at hand. Let's hope for a compassionate conservative who will give the festival an ideological airing out while keeping its theatrical philosophy intact. The premise is strong because it is simple: Wagner, nothing but Wagner, played to the hilt. This summer's "Ring," for all its flaws, kept the spirit alive, rising to moments of extreme emotion and achieving a vital transformation of the work. No less fascinating was the metamorphosis of the town itself. It became, as before, a temporary city of art, a brick-and-wood Byzantium. ♦

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THE BACK PAGE BY ARNOLD ROTH

AS YOU BIKE IT

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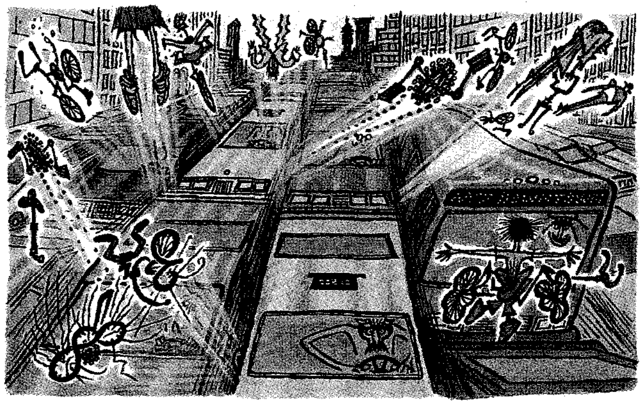
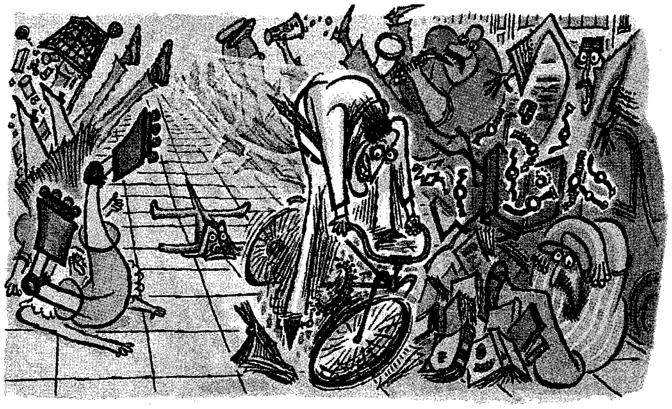
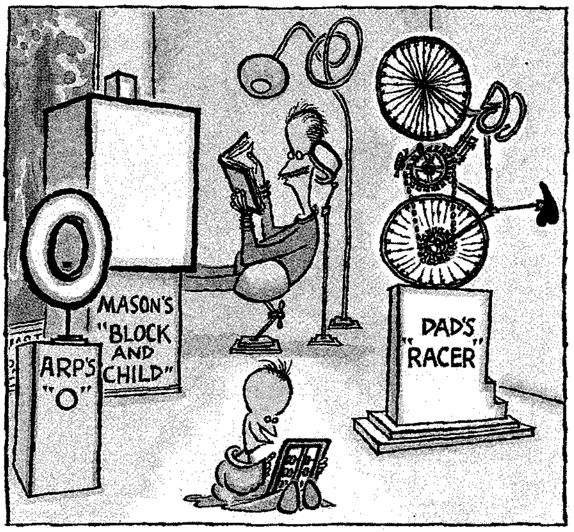


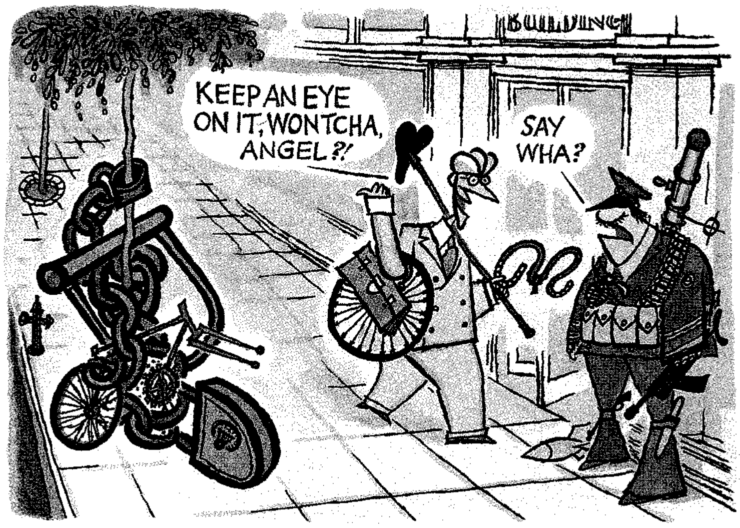
. . . or on the sidewalk.



Bicycles can be parked artistically in any civilized home.


MASON'S "BLOCK AND CHILD"
ARP'S "O"
DAD'S "RACER"

When parked on the street, however, they must be secured.


BUILDING
KEEP AN EYE ON IT, WONTCHA, ANGEL?!
SAY WHA?

Even so . . .